

Andrew Maraniss Transcript

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Hello again friends and welcome to Madison BookBeat, your listener-sponsored community radio home for Madison authors, topics, book events, and publishers. I'm your host, Stu Levitan.

*Our topic for today for a special Pride Month conversation is Glenn Burke, who was a rising young star in Major League Baseball in the late 70s until he was effectively run out of the game because he was gay. Our guest is award-winning and best-selling author Andrew Maraniss. His new book is **Singled Out, the true story of Glenn Burke**, from the good people at Philomel Books, an imprint of Penguin Random House.*

Andrew Maraniss is that rarest of authors, not just a true son of Madison, but a grandson of Madison, born right here in 1970 to Linda and David Maraniss. Linda, an environmentalist, David, of course, also being an award-winning, best-selling author, and the son of Mary Maraniss, a book editor at the UW Press, and her husband, Elliot, the subject of David's most recent book, and during the very period that Andrew writes about, my editor at the Capital Times. See the way these things all come out. I love it.

This is Andrew's third book examining the intersection of sports and society and our third conversation. It follows:

- 1. Strong Inside, Perry Wallace and the Collision of Race and Sports in the South in 2015, and*
- 2. Games of Deception, the true story of the first U.S. Olympic basketball team at the 1936 Olympics in Hitler's Germany. That came out in 2019.*

He received the Lillian Smith Book Award and the Lone Special Recognition Honor at the RFK Book Awards for Strong Inside, and the Sidney Taylor Honor Award for Games of Deception. He's also a visiting author at Vanderbilt University Athletics and a contributor to ESPN's TheUndefeated.com.

It is a pleasure to welcome back to Madison Book Beat, Andrew Maraniss.

Thank you, Stu. It's a pleasure to be back with you, and I love that family history that you gave. I feel such a strong tie to Madison, even though it's been over 40 years since I've lived there myself. But I love visiting pretty much every year and I feel like that's home, even though I've lived in seven or eight different states now. Madison has always felt like home and home of the best people. So thank you, Stu.

The tagline on the cover of the book calls Glenn Burke the first openly gay Major League Baseball player and inventor of the high five. We'll get to the high five in a bit, but as to Burke being, quote, openly gay. Now his teammates on the Dodgers and later the A's knew he was gay. The management eventually knew, but to the world at large, he was still in the closet. The door to the closet may have been open, but he was still in the closet. So how do you define him as openly gay?

Yeah, and I knew you were going to bring this up. You mentioned it on Twitter. So I'm glad we can talk about this right away. You're right. As far as a tagline of a book goes, there's not that much room to be nuanced, you know. But I think that it's fair to say that he was openly

gay in the sense that, as you mentioned, his teammates largely knew. He was open enough that the management of the Dodgers didn't want him around anymore. Open enough that Billy Martin, the manager of the Oakland A's, didn't want him on his team, said he didn't want an F word like Glenn to, quote unquote, contaminate his team. There were fans at the Oakland Coliseum, you know, his own home ballpark at that point, that were yelling homophobic epithets at him during games. In the offseason, he was living openly in the Castro District of San Francisco. So I don't think you could say that he was entirely closeted either. If you want to say it's not until he came out in 1982 in an interview with Inside Sports on the Today Show where the entire world knew, I think that's fair. But he was open enough that it cost him his Major League Baseball career and his teammates knew, and he wasn't hiding it during the offseason. So that's why I'm comfortable saying that he was openly gay.

If there were fans yelling homophobic slurs in baseball stadiums, why did no baseball writer write about it?

I think it was just a subject in those days that they didn't want to touch, you know. There were some beat writers with the Dodgers and the A's that knew and approached some of Glenn's teammates over the years and said, you know, if he's ever wanting to come out, you know, I'm the guy to come to tell that story. I think they felt it was a topic you just did not broach, that it would cost a player their career, as it ultimately did for Glenn. Teams certainly weren't doing anything to publicize the fact that they had gay players. In fact, they were trying to cover it up in the Dodgers case through a bribe offer. After the 1977 season, when Glenn, it was considered his rookie year even though he'd had a cup of coffee in 76. In 77, he played, started two games in the National League Championship Series against the Phillies. He started game one of the World Series at Yankee Stadium. He's a fourth outfielder, but he's an important part of the team. A lot of his teammates told me he was the most popular player in the clubhouse.

And when he has a meeting in the off season with Al Campanis, the general manager, he thinks it's a meeting to talk about his role on the team going forward in 78. Instead, Campanis says, we'd like you to get married. And Glenn says to a woman. And when Campanis says yes, Glenn refuses to go along with it. They offer him \$75,000 for what they said would be a nice honeymoon, which was the equivalent of the average major league player's salary at that time. And Glenn refused this bribe offer. And he knew that that was really spelling the end of his days with the Dodgers. And he's traded to the A's early in the 78 season.

So it was a topic that was either not wanting to be discussed or to be in fact covered up. And I believe that the sportwriters weren't really interested in writing about it either. We'll get to Campanis and Tommy Lasorda and that whole part of his life. But was there nobody at the Dodgers who said, wait a minute, we're the Dodgers. We're the team. We're the franchise that broke the color line. We can do this.

Was there nobody who saw the possibilities of being on the right side of history again?

Right. No one in management. Players liked Glenn. They loved Glenn. If it was up to them, I think there would have been an entirely different story, a different outcome. I interviewed Dusty Baker. He talked about how when Dusty was with the Atlanta Braves, Hank Aaron was that older figure, black player on the team that really took him under his wing and other players. And Dusty did the same with Glenn in Los Angeles. Glenn was funny. He was charismatic. He played good music. He loved to dance. He was just fun to be around. And the players, even on this veteran team, I mean, Garvey, Say, Lopes, Russell, Smith, Baker, Yeager, you can name those names here 40 years later. Glenn was the most popular player in that clubhouse.

And when he was traded, the sports writers at that time didn't know that Glenn was gay in L.A., but they did know what effect it had on the team when he was traded. And they wrote in the paper the next day that there were players sitting at their lockers crying. It was Don Sutton and Steve Garvey who were crying that this rookie fourth outfielder had been traded. That shows what sort of presence this guy had in the clubhouse.

And so he was incredibly popular with the players. It was Lasorda and Campanis and you can say by extension the ownership of the Dodgers that had this concern that if it was known that there was a gay player on the team, that would be bad public relations for the ball club. And this was a team that was very concerned with its image. As you might imagine, a Hollywood and L.A. team would be.

And Steve Garvey kind of represented what they wanted to portray. At least a lot of the teammates thought that Garvey was a fraud and that this image of him as being the all-American boy wasn't quite true. And so Garvey was the popular player publicly. Burke was the cast off when in reality within the clubhouse Garvey was the most unpopular player on the team and Glenn was the most popular.

And yet Garvey and Burke got along.

They got along, yeah, which is very interesting. And I think that's again a testament to Glenn Burke's personality is that he got along with all the players. And in a lot of baseball clubhouses even today, they're known for having cliques, especially along racial lines. The Hispanic players, the white players, and the black players, they may get along on the field, but they don't really hang out socially. But Glenn was someone that was a connector that brought everyone together.

And in Garvey's defense, I'll also say that Dusty Baker really liked him. When I interviewed Dusty, he said he had no problem with Garvey and that he was a good teammate and a good guy.

But the fact was that Don Sutton and he got in a fight, that Don Sutton threw a punch at him?

Yeah, they were brawling in the clubhouse to the point that there were visible scrapes and bruises on his face. But it was Glenn that was beloved in the clubhouse.

See, that kind of acrimony should have prepared Glenn for life under Billy Martin.

Right. You mentioned the 77 World Series. Glenn is the starting center fielder for the Los Angeles Dodgers, game one of the World Series against the New York Yankees. This is the pinnacle of his career. Yes. What do you think would have happened if he had forced the issue and announced that he was gay right after the series? Well, he had a boyfriend at the time that wanted him to come out during the series and felt like this would be the moment to do it, you know, in the eyes of the world. And baseball at that point in the 70s, you know, was the biggest sport in America. And you're starting in center field in Manhattan, or in the Bronx, I should say. You know, this would be the place to do it. Glenn was concerned that if he did it, it would cost him his career. He had that sense that this was, even if it was, you know, important what he was doing, even if it would be inspiring to some people, he understood how homophobic this environment of Major League Baseball was, and it wasn't going to be the feel-good story that some people hoped it would be.

You know, when Dave Copay, the Washington football player, came out earlier in the 1970s, he received loads and loads of hate mail. Even his own family members disowned him at that point. So there wasn't really a track record of any success of telling this story and being accepted, you know, for who you are. Think about it. Harvey Milk's assassinated around this same time that Glenn's coming up with the Dodgers. And so I just don't think that he had a sense that there would be positive media reaction, even polarizing. I don't think it would have been fair to say it even would have been polarizing. It would have been far more negative than positive at that point.

The Advocate newspaper did a story about just the idea that there were gay players. You know, they were closeted, but they were gay, and they wrote letters to every Major League Baseball team asking to discuss the issue. And I have the quote. I wish I had it in front of me, but the response from the Minnesota Twins public relations director was like, how dare you bring up this subject and insinuate that there might be a gay player in this area of quote-unquote total manhood is what he said. So it was inconceivable to some in baseball that there could even possibly be a gay man that would be athletic enough to play in the Major Leagues.

The quote from Tom Mee, which is on page 61 of the book, is in response to The Advocate:

"The cop-out, immoral lifestyle of the tragic misfits espoused by your publication has no place in organized athletics at any level. Your colossal gall in attempting to extend your perversion to an area of total manhood is just simply unthinkable."

Yeah. I mean, imagine that. And Glenn's reading that. He knows he's feeling that same attitude from the old school management of Major League Baseball.

I think it's interesting to wonder what if a player came out today, you know, and in this case I do think it would be largely met by a positive reaction.

It would be polarizing, but I think at the same time this player would probably be the most popular player in the Major Leagues. They'd probably sell the most jerseys, you know, just like it's not apples to apples comparison, but I think it would be a lot like Colin Kaepernick,

where this person would have an incredible following. They'd be respected for what they're saying, for their courage. At the same time, there would be a large segment of the country that, you know, would hate this person, and you'd see that through social media and through the response at some stadiums.

And hopefully we'll see that. That was Glenn Burke's wish on his deathbed, is that his experience would make it easier for a gay player to come out in the future. There's only been one since Glenn. It was Billy Bean, not the Billy Bean who's the Oakland A's executive, but the Billy Bean who played with the Padres and the Dodgers also. He's an executive with Major League Baseball now. He also came out after his playing day. So we haven't had an active gay Major Leaguer ever.

We're talking with Andrew Maraniss. His new book is [Singled Out](#), the true story of Glenn Burke. And yet there have been a number of not just high-profile lesbian athletes, but superstar lesbian athletes. Now, is that because:

A. Gay male athletes self-select themselves out of playing team sports because they know the homophobia they're going to encounter, or

B. Because the men who run the sports industrial complex are more kind of titillated by lesbianism as opposed to being freaked out by gay men?

Yeah, I think it's probably fair to say there's a little bit of both of that. I read an article in [Outsports.com](#), which is the leading LGBT sports website, and it did mention the fact that there maybe is some of that self-selection going on. I don't know that for sure. You know, I've seen that written about anecdotally, but on the other hand, we know there are gay athletes who are closeted who are playing every sport.

I do think that just culturally there's more acceptance of lesbian women, and there has been in the United States than gay men, especially in the area of sports. What women have had to deal with, though, is assumptions that if you play sports, you must be lesbian, you know? And so homophobia sort of seeps into perceptions of athletes and what you're supposed to be, you know, in so many different ways that are unfair, completely unfair to the athletes themselves.

I did have a minor league baseball player contact me after reading the book and say that Glenn's story was inspiring to them, you know? And I thought that was really cool to hear from this guy who's playing right now and said that he's been wondering at what point does he come out? He wants to do it while he's still an active player. I don't know that he's the type of player that will make it to the major leagues someday or not, but even if he were to come out as a minor league player, that would be history making as well. And that could be inspiring to a whole lot of gay young men and women who are athletes and can see that it can be done. And here's an example. Have that type of role model would be really important.

On the other hand, it's for no one else to say that someone should do it. Coming out is an individual decision for everyone, choosing exactly the right time and the way they want to

do it on their own terms. So as much as I can sit here as a straight author to say I would love to see Glenn Burke's vision come true, it's not for me to say.

How good an athlete was Glenn Burke? He was a great athlete. And everyone who was a teammate of his attested to that. I also interviewed Rupert Jones for this book who played many years in the major leagues, had gone to the same high school as Glenn in the Bay Area. Rupert said that Glenn was the best pure athlete he's ever seen in any sport. Glenn was a great high school basketball player. He led his team to an undefeated senior season and a Northern California championship. He was only about six feet tall, but he was a leading rebounder on the team and could dunk, touch the top of the backboard. Players would comment about the size of his biceps, 17 inch biceps. He was incredibly fast. He set stolen base records at two different levels of the minor leagues. And so athleticism was not an issue at all for Glenn. And that was his identity was as an athlete as well. That's what he did best in the world was play sports.

There was a coach for the Dodgers, Junior Gilliam, who said that Glenn had the potential to be the next Willie Mays. And you think about what a great athlete Willie Mays was as well. Glenn said another thing he said on his deathbed is that he regretted he hadn't given pro basketball a shot. And some people think he probably was a better basketball player even than the baseball player.

He had a mercurial temperament to say the least. He could be high energy, life of the clubhouse, or he could be arrogant and rebellious and totally disrespectful to his coaches and managers.

First, did you get the sense that this downside of his personality was due first to his sexual confusion and then once he realized he was gay to the homophobia he had to endure?

Yeah, I think there were elements to that. I'm not a trained counselor or psychiatrist or anything, but I do think that he was playing with his chip on his shoulder in a sense, also looking over his shoulder at the same time. He's hearing homophobic remarks from teammates and management who don't necessarily know that he's gay and he's having to internalize that. A lot of examples of cases where he's not allowed to do things that he wants to do. And you can imagine the frustration that would build up because of that.

I think he also just kind of grew up that way. In the Bay Area, growing up in Berkeley, the time of protests, as he's at high school at Berkeley High, he sees anti-war protests, freedom of speech protests happening on the Berkeley campus, marching by his school. His sister is one of the first members of the Black Panthers. So this idea of bowing down to authority was not something that Glenn ascribed to, right? He was his own man. He was proud of who he was, proud to be a Black man, proud to be a gay man, even if the latter was secret.

But there's some funny stories about his rebelliousness too, where he's on the baseball field. He's sort of not abiding by the unwritten rules of the game. He'll steal third base with two outs. There's a fly ball hit to him in his last minor league game. He knows he's been called up to the majors. He's just playing this game out. The last out of the game is a fly ball hit his direction in the outfield. He switches hands on his glove, catches the ball with his right

hand. He'll talk back to managers. You tell him not to do certain things. At one point, he and a bunch of his teammates are smoking dope in the hotel. Team trainer sort of confronts the players like, whose marijuana is this? Is it yours? Everyone's lying, saying, no, it's not mine. And they get to Glenn. He's like, yeah, it's mine. And don't you take it either. So I thought that was a pretty funny part of his personality, but it didn't exactly square with the Dodger way.

The method that the Dodgers had throughout their organization, the image that they wanted to project, whether he was gay or not, Glenn didn't really fit in with that. He signs with the Dodgers in 72, doesn't get called up until 76. Do you think he could have moved up faster if he had been a little less confrontational with his managers and coaches and lived the Dodger way a little bit more?

It's possible, but I honestly say my answer is no. I talked to Joe Simpson, you know, who's a major league announcer, a broadcaster now, played with the Dodgers. He said that if there was a favorite by Al Campanis among the minor league outfielders, it was Glenn. Joe thought that he deserved to get called up before Glenn Burke did. And he thought that they favored Glenn. I think that he had the right amount of seasoning in the minor leagues. I think that he might have made it up faster if he had been in another organization. You know, this was a Dodger team that was loaded with veteran players. It was a tough outfield to break into. And so at the same time, that's a real testament to Glenn's ability that he did break into it and was starting in the playoffs in 1977 when you had guys like Reggie Smith, Dusty Baker, Rick Monday, Lee Lacy, you know, playing for that team. It wasn't an easy team to make as an outfielder.

And then he gets called back up in 77. How long before his teammates really realized that he was gay?

I think they knew during that 77 season. Guys who had played with him in the minor leagues already knew. But again, there weren't that many players called up to the major league team. And it was pre-social media days. You know, things just didn't, news didn't spread quite as quickly. But guys like Dusty Baker and Davey Lopes, they were picking up on it when Glenn would excuse himself from social situations pretty much every time when the team would get back to the airport after road trips. All the guys would have, you know, wives and girlfriends picking them up in one spot. Glenn would walk all the way down to the other end of the airport so players wouldn't see who was picking him up. If they were all going out to clubs after the game, he might stay a while, then he'd leave. They tried to introduce him to women. He would make up an excuse why he couldn't hang around. Like even excuses that were not believable, 11.30 at night saying he had to go call his mom, you know, or that he had to go shopping. And guys would like, where are you going to go shopping now, you know? So you can imagine the pressure that Glenn was under and how difficult that was for him. But he wasn't willing to, you know, he said there were guys that were gay that were married, you know, and were faking it. Glenn wasn't going to do that either.

Apparently, was it Dusty Baker's sister had some pretty good gaydar?

Yeah, it was a friend of his ex-wife. They were in Houston to play the Astros and they were having lunch together at this woman's house who was lesbian. And Glenn excused himself to go to the bathroom and she asked Dusty if there were any players, gay players in the major leagues. And he said, not that I know of. And she said, well, are there any gay players on your team? And he looked at her funny like, I just said there weren't in the majors. How would there be one on my team? And she said, well, that boy in the bathroom is gay. And Glenn or Dusty sort of denied it at first. And then all of these episodes, you know, where Glenn had gone scarce, you know, sort of popped back up into his head. And he began to consider that, you know, it's probably true. And so he asked Marvin Webb, who had been a minor league teammate of Glenn's, was sort of a fringe AAA player, had grown up in the Bay Area also. And Marvin wasn't going to confirm it for him. He felt like that was Glenn's place to do. But he said, you're just going to have to ask Glenn. He wouldn't deny it. And so at that point, Dusty and Davey Lopes were certain.

It's clear that Dusty Baker and Davey Lopes were totally cool with it. But did they ever talk to Glenn about it?

Yeah, it was kind of a, I don't know, don't ask, don't tell type of atmosphere, I guess. Talking to those players, they said it's just something that we just didn't talk about then, you know. And Glenn never came to them to confide either. It was sort of this open secret, everyone pretending that nothing was going on, you know. And so Glenn missed out on a level of support there. You know, I think if he had confided into players like Dusty and Davey, he would have found support. I don't think it's fair to say he would have been supported by that whole clubhouse, though. And I think in Glenn's mind, that just wasn't worth it. And he also said, what business is it of anyone's, you know? It doesn't affect the way I play. It doesn't affect the team. Although you could say it did affect the way he played because he was looking over his shoulder. But it didn't have a negative impact on anyone. It was his own life. And he felt like that, again, he also felt like that was something you just don't talk about.

Did he know that they knew?

That's a really good question. I don't, I think he must have deep down. But in his autobiography, he writes things that make you believe that he didn't know that they knew or that he thought that he was maintaining this secret in a way. I think it's a little conflicting. You know, I would have loved to interview him about that because it's inconsistent in terms of how he viewed how other people saw him. At one point, he'll say, what difference does it make? Other points, he'll say he was looking over his shoulder. I think there are a lot of mixed messages, a lot of mixed feelings there. He was pretending like they didn't know.

We're talking with Andrew Maraniss. His new book has singled out the true story of Glenn Burke, the first semi-openly gay player in Major League Baseball. And we'll talk about how he invented the high five. But let's put Glenn Burke's story in the context of the times. You briefly, you mentioned Thomas Mee, Minnesota Twins. You mentioned Harvey Milk, but we've got Miss Florida Sunshine herself. We've got California State Senator Briggs. We've got the disco sucks night at Comiskey Park. Remind

people, and then we've got Harvey Milk and the development of political power in the Castro. Put Glenn Burke's story in the late 70s in the context of what's going on in the country in terms of gay rights.

Yeah, so that's one thing I try to do in all the books is place the character's story in the context of the times, what's happening in the country. And so in this case, it wasn't really a stretch at all to try to relate this gay player to what was happening in gay rights or a backlash to it. Most of these events were happening in the same places where Glenn was living or playing. So when he's in spring training with the Dodgers in Vero Beach, Florida, at the same time, Anita Bryant is down in Miami leading an anti-gay rights campaign that is actually successful. They had an ordinance that protected the rights of gay workers in Miami, and she helped overturn that ordinance. However, there were a lot of gay rights activists around the country that felt like maybe they lost the battle in that case, but that was very helpful because it helped frame the issue. It showed the level of homophobia they were up against, and it sort of helped to create more of an LGBTQ community where it hadn't necessarily existed before. And so they emerged from that stronger.

And so when there was this Briggs Amendment proposed in California that, again, would have stripped gay public employees of their right to work, especially teachers, that was defeated in California. And that's when Glenn is living in Los Angeles. He's living in the Castro at the same time that Harvey Milk is running his camera store and developing his neighborhood and city political power. He's playing with the Oakland A's when Milk is assassinated. So all this is happening right around him. And you see elements of that same homophobia directed at Glenn, but you also see him standing up for himself sort of in the spirit of gay rights when he stands up to Al Campanis and refuses to accept the bribe.

I included Disco Demolition Night at Comiskey Park, which was, you know, in hindsight, sort of seen as a symbolic end to the disco era or a backlash to disco, which disco itself had been associated with black and Latino culture and gay culture. And this is the same time that Glenn is run out of Major League Baseball by Billy Martin. And so I attempted to kind of connect those culturally or socially, you know, as part of the same backlash movement. And so you see, just like today, you know, movements progressing, but also being pushed back against. And it was clearly evident in Glenn's life.

And then after his playing days, you know, briefly, he sort of experienced this moment of happiness and acceptance and love in the Castro. But pretty quickly, his friends and softball teammates are getting sick and dying of HIV and AIDS, you know, this new disease that initially people are wondering, like, what is this? How do you get it? What's going on? And Glenn himself dies of AIDS in 1995.

There's an interesting impact on both Anita Bryant's career and disco that on one hand, her anti-gay diatribe and campaign effectively ends her career. Yes, it does. She's nothing afterwards. And yet the high watermark of disco is right before disco demolition night. And there are no big disco hits afterwards. It's a very interesting dynamic at play there.

Yeah, I would love to hear your thoughts about, you know, what I wrote about disco, because you know so much more about music than I do. But I mean, it was pretty stark. I think like a month before disco demolition night, the top 10 hits were almost all disco. A month after, there were none, you know. And in some ways, it's like this controversy kept both things going. And then after the controversy was gone, Anita disappeared, and disco disappeared as well.

I'm a rock and roller, so I always had my issues with disco. But that was as to dancing. It wasn't the cultural significance of it. And now in addition to society-wide homophobia, we have several individual villains, starting with Dodger manager Tommy Lasorda, who had a gay son whose sexuality he denied to the day he died. And as you mentioned, Al Campanis, who a few years later would get fired for making racist comments. Was Glenn Burke oblivious or did he intentionally play with fire by becoming friendly with Lasorda's teenage son Spunky?

I think there is an element of playing with fire there, and I really do. I mean, that was just Glenn. But at the same time, you say playing with fire, I mean, is being friends with someone playing with fire? But it was because of homophobia that it would be considered playing with fire.

Tommy's son, Tommy Jr., Spunky Lasorda was gay. As you mentioned, Tommy Sr. never publicly acknowledged that. He never acknowledged the cause of death when his son died, which was AIDS. He profanely denied that. And when Glenn was friends with Spunky, who was around the team, I mean, if one thing you can say in favor of Tommy Sr., if you want to, is that he didn't hide his son. He brought him around the team all the time. He came on road trips. He was at spring training. There were thousands of gay men moving to San Francisco because their families had kicked them out of the house or disowned them. Sort of never did that. He had dinner with his son every Sunday night when the Dodgers were in town. So he was around the team a lot. Dusty Baker said that he loved to talk to Spunky about disco. You know, they talked about the latest music.

But Glenn being gay and Tommy knowing that, he didn't like this friendship. At one point, Glenn and Spunky were going to show up on Tommy Sr.'s doorstep dressed as if they were on a date with Tommy Jr. in pigtails. And they knew that that was... I mean, so clearly they were playing with fire even thinking of that. They said that Lasorda would have shot them and then died of a heart attack, you know, if they had actually followed through with that.

And so I think it's that friendship and Lasorda's awareness of it and ultimately Campanis' awareness of it that led to this scene at the Holiday Inn in the Bay Area where Campanis is offering Glenn \$75,000 to get married. And this is right after he had started in those playoff games. So it wasn't like they were down on him as a player. They were pretty high on him as a player. And so why all of a sudden are they looking to trade him? It's because Glenn wouldn't go by, you know, abide by their plan to cover it up.

I think the Campanis incident is perhaps the most shocking thing in the whole book. I mean, it's absolute. We'll give you \$75,000 if you'll just get married to a woman. A couple of years later, Burke does finally go public and he gives an interview to Brian Gumbel. It seems to me, reading the transcript

that you've got in the book, that he kind of danced around the issue of just how much Campanis wanted him to get married and why he was traded to the A's. Do you agree that he pulled his punches a little?

Yeah, I think so. When you watch that interview, you wish that Glenn would have said more. And I think that he did that because he was hoping to get another chance to play in the major leagues. Part of his reasoning for going on the show is he thought that there might have been a perception that he was out of baseball because he simply wasn't good enough. And he hoped that if people understood, well, no, it's because the second part of his career was with the A's. It was because Billy Martin didn't want a gay player around. It was because Campanis didn't want a gay player around. So he had been a victim of this injustice of homophobia, not that he wasn't a good enough baseball player. And he hoped that there might be a team out there that would be more accepting of a gay player and say, oh, let's give him a shot.

I don't think that it was a realistic expectation on his part. He'd been out of the game for two years. His pure baseball statistics had not been overwhelming. And so I think he was at a point in his life where he really didn't know what to do next. His profession had been unfairly taken away from him on one hand, yet he had also throughout his whole life really only considered himself an athlete. He didn't really have any career aspirations outside of sports. Unfairly, he wasn't going to be hired probably as a coach or a phys ed teacher by many schools. They weren't out looking for gay black men to be coaches at that point in time. And so he was really sort of stuck. And giving it one last shot to try to make it in the majors, and that didn't happen.

There was very little reaction to his interview with Gumbel. You imagine if someone went on Today Show now and a known player who had just been in the World Series, there would be so much follow-up to that. Social media, ESPN, everybody would be on that story. There was no follow-up to this interview other than the article that accompanied it in Inside Sports Magazine. And it's because I believe at the same time is when the AIDS story was really just exploding in the country. So many stories about gay men in San Francisco were related to AIDS, not to this sort of marginal baseball player.

How much did his boyfriend at the time have to do with sort of pressuring or inducing him to finally go public?

A lot. And Michael Smith had been trying to do that since the 77 postseason. Finally in 1980, he does convince, well, he doesn't even really convince him. He just goes ahead and writes this article for Inside Sports and interviews Glenn for it. Glenn thought that they were going to split the money. I mean, this is the point in Glenn's life where he is, it's important enough to him that this article runs because he might get some money from it. You're not going to get rich off half of a payment from a magazine for an article, but that's what Smith had told him. And Smith didn't follow through. He didn't get that money. He really sort of used him for his own notoriety and being the author of this article.

They also had put money into renovating a condo in San Francisco and Glenn had assumed that both of their names were on the deed and when Smith sold it, Glenn's name wasn't on it. He got none of the money there either. So it was an up and down relationship all along and you can see two really important ways that Glenn was cut out of this money that he badly needed. And it was only shortly after that where Glenn's living homeless on the streets of San Francisco. You know, a handful of years after starting in Yankee Stadium, he's living on the streets of San Francisco and he's hooked on cocaine and crack at the same time. Really tragic end to Glenn's life.

Let's go back a few years before that to the end of the 77 season and Glenn Burke's apparent invention of the high five.

Right. And this is another case where you could say no doubt in the annals of history, someone else has slapped someone else's hand, right? But it wasn't talked about, photographed. It wasn't necessarily named the high five either. But in October or coming down the stretch of the 77 season, Dodgers already had three players, Garvey, Smith, and Say, who had hit 30 home runs or more. Dusty Baker was stuck on 29 for it seemed like the entire month of September. But if he were to hit his 30th home run, they would become the first team in Major League history to have four players with 30 or more homers.

So it comes down to the last homestand of the season against the Astros. In the first three games of that series, Dusty doesn't hit his 30th homer. He's kind of resigned to the fact that it's just not going to happen, especially because J.R. Richard is going to be on the mound for the Astros in the last game of the season. He throws 100 miles an hour. And so in his first two at-bats, Dusty doesn't hit that home run. You can see fans in the stands betting on the fact that he's not going to do it. You know, Lasorda is trying to pump him up with all this kind of BS motivational talk. And finally, in what turns out to be the last at-bat of the game, Dusty Baker hits that 30th home run. And so Dodger Stadium crowd is going crazy. Glenn Burke's on deck. And when Dusty touches home plate and is running back to the dugout, Glenn raises his arm in celebration and Dusty slaps it. And that's considered the first high five in history.

The Dodgers coined the term high five after that. It kind of becomes their signature move that no one really has done before, kind of like the Bash Brothers at the A's years later, you know, with the forearms. The Dodgers are slapping high fives after big moments in that postseason and the next year. The game program the next year has a picture of Steve Garvey and Dusty Baker high-fiving. So you see Burke sort of just replaced, you know. And there it says high five beneath them on the scoreboard. They would explain to fans how to high five and when to high five. So it really was considered this new cultural phenomenon.

Some of Glenn's teammates had told me that he did things like that in the minor leagues too. It was all part of sort of a hand jive culture he had grown up with, you know, in Oakland. And, you know, in a more sort of revealing way, the fact that Glenn was at the heart of this says a lot about him too. You know, he always celebrated other people's success. You know, he wasn't just purely about himself. That's why he was a valued

teammate. So he was celebrating Dusty's home run. He was an exuberant guy. You know, it's no surprise that Glenn would be the one to do this. But it's also, you know, it's tragic in a way that a player who did care about his teammates so much, who did have so much love and enthusiasm for them and for the game itself, was deemed, you know, untouchable, you know, or, you know, unworthy of even being a part of this game by other people.

At least they had Dusty Baker in that high five program that the Dodgers. Because Dusty acknowledged that it was Glenn Burke because everything cool comes from the Bay Area.

Yeah, that's what he told me. Because people, you know, it takes two to high five and so people would say, well, did Glenn invent it or did Dusty invent it? And I asked Dusty, he said, no, you got to give Glenn credit. Everything cool comes from the Bay Area and that's where Glenn was from.

And this is also about the time that a closeted black rookie essentially puts Nike on the path to becoming the official uniform and sportswear supplier to Major League Baseball. That's an astonishing... Wait, what?

Yeah, thank you for mentioning that because that's one of my favorite curiosities of this whole story.

So I was out in Oakland and I was interviewing their clubhouse manager, Steve Vicinich, who's been there. He's there now. He had been there back in the 70s when Glenn was playing. He had actually played youth baseball with Glenn in the Bay Area. So he knows everything about the A's history. And he said at the end of our interview, he said, you know about Glenn being the first player to wear Nikes, don't you? And I said, I had no idea. Never heard that before. And he said, well, yeah, you got to get in touch with the Nike sales rep. He's still around, Bill Frechette. And he gave me his phone number. I texted him. He told me the story.

So when Glenn was with the Dodgers in 77, you know, like a lot of teams still do or did back then, they had autograph days on Sundays. You know, like get to the game early. There'll be players sitting at card tables in the concourse and kids line up for autographs. Well, Bill Frechette was a food vendor at Dodger Stadium, mostly malted ice, he said. But he also ran a new shoe store in Santa Monica called the Athletic Department, which was owned by Nike at that time. Nike was just getting started. It only started in the early 70s, right? And so this was a fledgling brand, a new store. He wasn't sure if this job was really going to last. So he also, you know, sold food at Dodger Stadium.

And he was there in the concourse as Glenn sitting alone at the card table waiting to sign some autographs, introduces himself, tells him about the shoe store. Glenn has heard of Nike basketball shoes as a basketball player. So he takes him up on the offer to come by the store and get some free shoes. And while he's there, he sees some soccer shoes that Nike has made called Astro Grabbers. They're for artificial turf. And the Dodgers played a lot of games on Astro Turf on the road. And so in the 77 playoffs, when they're at Veteran Stadium in Philadelphia, Glenn has dyed his Astro Grabbers blue and he's wearing them on

the field in Philadelphia, along with a couple other players that he's shared these shoes with. And so Glenn Burke becomes the first major league player to wear Nikes in a game. They're not baseball cleats. They're soccer shoes that he's converted.

And because of this relationship with Glenn, Frechette gets to know other Dodger players. Rick Sutcliffe becomes the first major leaguer as a Dodger to wear real Nike baseball cleats in a game a year or two later. Frechette, because of this connection in the major league clubhouse, becomes Nike's top baseball guy. Eventually becomes like one of the major executives with Nike after being one of their first employees, period, with the shoe store. And now you look at a baseball jersey on the field, every player is wearing Nike jerseys and uniforms. And so this relationship between baseball and Nike goes back to Glenn Burke in 1977.

It's too bad he didn't get a cut of that business.

No kidding. I feel like they should make, I mentioned this to Bill the other maybe couple weeks ago, we were chatting or texting. And I said, Nike should make some Glenn Burke model of shoes. I think they would do well right now, especially if they did sort of a retro 70s look, Glenn Burke model shoe, I think would be pretty popular. Or with some rainbow colors. Yeah, exactly.

After Burke turns down Al Campanis' efforts to play matchmaker, he's traded to the Oakland A's, which is owned by the very erratic Charles O. Finley. Bob Dylan, I don't know if you're familiar with the Bob Dylan song, Catfish, but he's got a line there about Catfish Hunter used to work on Mr. Finley's farm, but the old man wouldn't pay. So that's how he got traded to the Yankees. Glenn Burke's homecoming was not a happy one, was it?

No, it wasn't. And he hoped that maybe it would be. I mean, he was disappointed to be traded from the Dodgers, but he is going back home to the Bay Area.

And not his first season there, but his second season there, Billy Martin is hired as the A's new manager. And he thinks that this is good news too, because they're both alums of Berkeley High. They share that in common. He knows that Billy Martin is kind of a fighter, scrapper type guy, which Glenn is also. But he faced more division, homophobia in the clubhouse. These guys hadn't grown up with Glenn through the minor leagues. They didn't know him as well. And so they were a little bit more upfront about not feeling comfortable around Glenn. Some of the players were, Mike Norris told me that. And Billy Martin himself. And again, I asked Norris if there was a racial aspect to this also. He said, no, he didn't consider Billy Martin racist, but he was definitely homophobic. He told the players that, you know, here's Glenn Burke, he's an FAG, you know. And then when he was talking to sports writers at a bar in spring training, he said he wasn't going to let Glenn contaminate his team, was the way he put it. And so he sends Glenn down to the minor leagues and Glenn knows he's never going to get a shot to get called up because of the way Martin felt about him. And so he's out of baseball. You know, he's starting in '77 World Series. He's out of baseball for good. He plays his last major league game in '79, his last minor league game in 1980. It only lasts a brief three years.

On the matter of language, there's a page in which you have two quotes attributed to Billy Martin, each containing a word beginning in F. One is a three-letter noun, which you just spelled out. The other is a seven-letter gerund. Now, according to the FCC, we can say the three-letter word on the air. We cannot say during this time of day, the seven-letter word. In the book, you spell out the full seven-letter word, but you do not spell out the three-letter word, just have F and two dashes. Why was the seven-letter word acceptable and not the three-letter word?

Yeah, that's a great question. I hadn't really thought about it that way. Well, you know, my books are considered young adult books, and I consider them for anybody, but really they're marketed towards teenagers, you know, high school students. And so I think that it would be considered more offensive if you're... The F-A-G word, which I just mentioned on the air, it would be more offensive in that way than the other F word. Because it could be perceived as more personal, you know, as more painful to read that word. And that's the reason why.

And, you know, I have a scene where Billy, Tommy Lasorda's famous meltdown after Dave Kingman has just destroyed the Dodgers at Wrigley Field, which you can listen to. The audio is on the air, but I've got bleep in there several times. I felt like it was just too many usages of that F word in a row for a book that some young people are reading. So I think if I were writing the book and it was strictly considered for adults, that there wouldn't be any dashes in the book, but it's meant to be respectful of those readers who would feel personally offended by reading it.

And on that point, just for the record, while the FCC would let me say that three-letter word, it would violate WRT's internal policy of treating all persons with respect. So I understand your point.

The Oakland A's posted a tweet the other day, quote, "We are proud to honor and celebrate the legacy of Glenn Burke, the first openly gay player in the MLB and A's alum, by renaming our annual Pride Night, the Glenn Burke Pride Night," and they put a rainbow flag. Was that an honest apology and reckoning or the rankest form of hypocrisy?

Yeah, I think you could view it either way, but I'm willing to give the A's the benefit of the doubt here if they go a little bit further. I mean, there's only so much you can say in a tweet. I think that I would love to see the Dodgers do something too. You know, I think that here's the way I look at it. When I wrote my book about Perry Wallace, who was the first black basketball player in the SEC, he told the truth about the racism that he was enduring at the time it was happening back in the 1960s. And this university, which is my alma mater and where I work today, didn't want to hear it, you know, and ran him out of town for simply telling the truth. 40 years later, when people had changed and times had changed to some extent, they're wanting to celebrate him, you know, name streets after him, retire his jersey, endow scholarships in his name, invite him back to campus to speak, which is all well and good. But again, you could say, is that good or is that just so hypocritical to be unimaginable?

And what he said is that reconciliation without the truth is just acting. And a lot of times schools, companies, families are eager to have a photo op where everybody's back together and smiling. And if they haven't really addressed the truth of what got them in the predicament in the first place, you know, it's purely for show. But he said if the truth is present, that he welcomes those opportunities for education and for healing, which are necessary.

And so I think if the Oakland A's are willing to rename their Pride Night after Glenn Burke, let's take that as a good thing and see what they do with it from there. You know, tell Glenn's story from there, the whole truth of it from there. I think that the Dodgers should do the same thing. Just like you mentioned, you know, they celebrate the fact that they desegregated Major League Baseball with Jackie Robinson, but it's important to tell the full Jackie Robinson story also, which people are starting to talk more and more now about how the Dodgers essentially stole him from the Negro Leagues and didn't compensate the Negro League team that they signed him from.

I think if you're going to tell Glenn Burke's story, you need to talk about the bribery offer, the fact that what Billy Martin called him, the fact that he was driven from the game. But, you know, for the A's and the Dodgers to continue to ignore Glenn Burke, I think would be worse, so I'm willing to say that this is a good thing that he's starting to be recognized by the teams that he played for, especially by the A's in the area that he grew up in. But I think you could say the same for the Dodgers as a team that he came up with. He played in the World Series for them; he did make history with them. You know, the players on the Dodgers loved him, so acknowledge the fact that he was mistreated but also celebrate the fact that he was a part of those franchises and try to lead the conversation forward so that gay players who are in the major leagues right now will feel comfortable enough to come out.

Next year will be a half century since he signed with the Dodgers, and still there has been no active MLB player acknowledging that he was gay. Right? And I think that the factors that create the environment where a player would be comfortable coming out, one of those factors is having teams celebrate Glenn Burke. So that's why I think it would be wrong to say that this is purely hypocritical; they shouldn't be doing it. Yes, they should be doing it; they should be doing more too. But things like this that show an organization is willing to put Glenn's name out there to tell his story, to invite fans to come and celebrate this, that is a step in the right direction.

Last year I saw after Tom Brenneman made those homophobic remarks on the Reds broadcast, there were a few major league players that got on Twitter that night and said, "That's not who we are. You know, all fans are welcome, you know, at our games or in our clubhouse," which was the first time I'd seen any major league players say anything positive related to LGBT rights. And so, you know, these may be small steps, but they're important building blocks to creating that larger environment that you want to see.

You mentioned that you write primarily for teenage readers and the book is published by Philomel Books, which is the Penguin Random House imprint for younger readers. School boards around the

country are becoming increasingly fearful of or actually preventing guests from addressing racism and gay rights; this book deals with both. Are you having any difficulty scheduling appearances in high schools to talk about it?

Yeah, thank you for mentioning that. It's a big issue or concern for me, especially living here in Tennessee where we have had legislation like that passed this past session in terms of LGBT. It's a law that gives parents a right to opt out of instruction that mentions gay characters or issues.

*Oh, I hate to leave you hanging right there, but that is all the time we have for this broadcast version of our conversation with Andrew Maraniss about his book *Singled Out: The True Story of Glenn Burke*. But to hear the answer to that question and about another 10 minutes of our conversation, please turn your browser to wortfm.org.*

*Next week, another Pride Month show: an encore presentation of our conversation with Dick Wagner about his book *We've Been Here All Along: Wisconsin's Early Gay History*. Until then, on behalf of News and Public Affairs Director Shali Pittman and all of us here at Madison Bookbeat, I'm Stu Levitan. Thank you for joining us. Now as our friend Ben Sidron plays us out with a little bit of Little Sherry, please stay tuned for Alex Wilding White and All Around Jazz. You're listening to WORT 89.9 FM.*