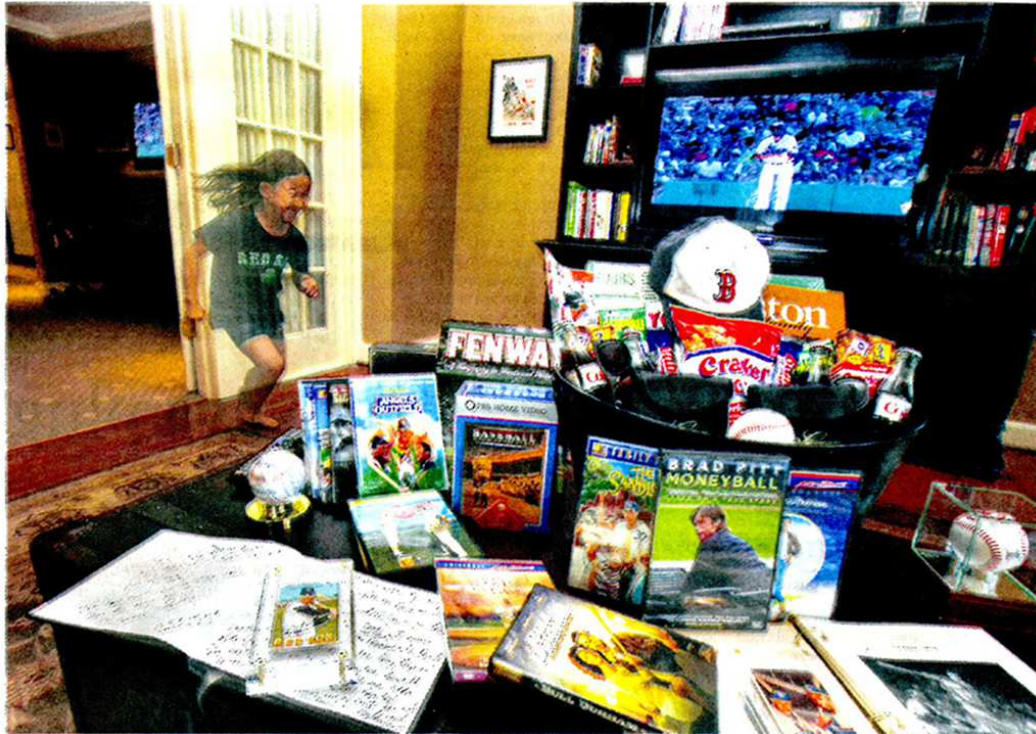


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GLOBE STAFF PHOTOS BY STAN GROSSFELD

A bucket full of candy and other goodies awaits fans (like this youngster) who stay at the baseball suite at Hotel Commonwealth.

SUITE TREAT



This luxury hotel room is a bit of hardball heaven

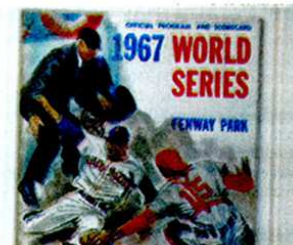
By Stan Grossfeld
GLOBE STAFF

Where else in the world can you sleep in the same bed that Carlton Fisk, Johnny Pesky, Nomar Garciaparra, Fred Lynn, Jason Varitek, Tim Wakefield, Joe Perry of Aerosmith, Tyler Florence of the Food Network, and Bill "Spaceman" Lee slept in?

Only in the Luxury Baseball Suite at the Hotel Commonwealth in Kenmore Square, just a Big Papi blast away from Fenway Park. It features rare collectibles of baseball greats such as Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Jackie Robinson, and Ted Williams set amidst a classy 1930s and '40s baseball decor.

"Oh, I loved it," said Wakefield, who stayed there for the premiere of his movie, "Knuckleball!," on Sept. 18, 2012. "I thought the decor in it was fantastic. There's so much history there. So much nostalgia. It's really, really cool. A real comfortable room."

The baseball experience begins in the bou-
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For a mere \$755 per night, doorman Zelalem Weldesemayat (in Red Sox jersey) will welcome you to the baseball suite, where you'll find a lineup of baseball-themed CDs and memorabilia such as a 1967 World Series program, signed balls, and classic trading cards.



STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

Loyal Sox fan Lynne Smith visits the Luxury Baseball Suite at the Hotel Commonwealth, the only room with a baseball for a doorknob.

Luxury room is hardball heaven

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tique hotel's hallway. No need to remember your room number. It's the only room with a baseball sticking out of the wall next to the entrance.

Open the door and you see a shadow box containing an original 1933 Babe Ruth baseball card. It currently sells for \$1,000 on eBay. Nearby is a 1934 Lou Gehrig card.

Some locals have objected to seeing Ruth and Gehrig, both Yankee greats. Heresy, they say, in the shadow of Fenway Park. They also found fault with the downplaying of the 2004 champion Red Sox.

"It's a sophisticated luxury suite playing homage to baseball," said hotel general manager Adam Sperling, who grew up in Illinois. "It's not just Red Sox."

Nothing ever has been stolen here, according to Sperling (who doesn't know about the missing "Fever Pitch" video). Not even by Dave Roberts, the most famous Red Sox thief of all, whose stolen base helped break the Curse of the Bambino in 2004 and who stayed in the Baseball Suite with his wife in 2010.

ganis (1955), and a Robinson (1954).

The first guest was the late Pesky, who stayed in the suite for Opening Day 2010. Pesky sat in the tall, leather wingback chair and told Williams stories.

"I didn't want him to stop," said Sperling.

Kids who stay in the suite make a beeline for the large welcome basket, which includes Cracker Jacks, Topps baseball cards, Baby Ruth candy bars, retro bottles of Coca-Cola, chocolate baseballs, binoculars, and a Fenway Park coffee table book.

Even the bathroom has art. There may be some poetic justice in sitting on the toilet and looking at a posterized image of former Sox pitcher Josh Beckett, whose beer-and-chicken hijinks ended with his trade to the Dodgers last year.

The suite has a video library of 40 classic baseball movies — roughly four days of continuous viewing. There are complete copies of every Red Sox playoff game in 2004 and 2007, and the famous Abbott and Costello "Who's On First" skit.

Even the price of the room is baseball-themed. It is \$755 per night,

The "Cowboy Up" Red Sox of 2004 invaded the Baseball Suite last September, using it as their hospitality suite for three days before being honored as part of the 100th anniversary of Fenway Park. There was no word of any guest named "Jack Daniels" there, but an oversized refrigerator stocked with ice-cold beer was placed in the suite.

According to some hotel insiders, Kevin Millar held court, and closer Keith Foulke got into a loud debate with Garciaparra, the shortstop who was traded in midseason.

"The overnight guy called me at home at, like, 2 o'clock and said, 'What do I do?'" said Sperling. "I'm like, 'Just go up there.' They were having fun, getting rowdy — not in a bad way. They were loud and proud."

Perry didn't live up to his bad-boy reputation when he stayed in the suite to see his musical sons play with TAB the Band.

"Joe Perry was a good boy," said Sperling. "He was being a good dad."

Red Sox manager John Farrell and his predecessor Bobby Valentine both stayed there during the interview process. They were polar opposites, according to Sperling.

"Farrell just kind of goes about his business and is very friendly; Bobby Valentine stops and stands there until people recognize him," said Sperling with a smile.

The Baseball Suite is divided by French doors and has the feel of an exclusive men's club, with Oriental rugs, brass lamps, and an old leather steamer trunk that looks as though it could have lugged the Babe's wardrobe on long train trips.

The walls are decorated with photographs, including a 1952 sepia-toned photo of Robinson stealing home plate captured by Pulitzer Prize winner Nat Fein, a sweet Williams swing from 1941, and a classic 1942 shot of the crowd weaving through Kenmore Square on the way to the ballpark.

There's also a framed photo of the dusty inside of the Green Monster and an original 1967 World Series program (Red Sox vs. St. Louis Cardinals) to commemorate the Impossible Dream season.

The suite is a mini-Cooperstown. There are baseballs signed by Pesky, Fisk, and Jim Rice. Framed baseball cards include a Pesky (1958), a Williams (1941), a Mickey Mantle and Hank Aaron (1958 World Series), a Tony Conigliaro (1967), a Harry Ag-

representing the number of home runs hit by the great Aaron. There are two great restaurants downstairs (Eastern Standard and Island Creek Oyster Bar) and there is a \$42 overnight valet parking charge. When you bend down to pick up the bill from under the door in the morning, remember the immortal words of Tom Hanks in "A League of Their Own": "There's no crying in baseball."

Oddly enough, the Baseball Suite faces Kenmore Square and not Fenway Park. The rooms that face the ballpark are smaller than the 6,000-square-foot Baseball Suite and could not be converted.

But judging from the guest book comments, a good time was had by all, even Yankees fans.

Florence, an avowed lover of the Bronx Bombers, explains the symbiotic relationship of Yankees and Red Sox fans.

"We need each other," he writes. "Because at the end of the day, who gives a [expletive] about Baltimore?"

Fisk, a Hall of Famer who played more games for the White Sox than the Red Sox, praises the "fabulous suite w/ all the memorabilia" before gushing, "I am part of Red Sox Nation!!!"

Lee uses a dateline of "Earth, 2010" to wax nostalgic about the loud music (Kenny Rogers and the First Edition at Lucifer's) that used to keep him awake all night in Kenmore Square. The cave-like Rathskeller (a.k.a. The Rat) was located in what is now the basement of the hotel.

"Boy those were the 'Daze'" writes Lee.

The Spacemen apparently had a weird dream about a midget and two legendary Negro League stars in the suite.

"Now Eddie Gaedel, Satchel Paige, and Cool Papa Bell are running over my chest all night long," he wrote. "Some room!"

The Globe's Bob Ryan, who has seen hundreds of hotel rooms, stayed in the suite with his wife Elaine.

"Short of bunking inside the left field wall, this is the greatest lodging experience a baseball fan can have!" wrote Ryan. "After this, the Residence Inn is going to seem pedestrian."

The bottom line: If you don't love this suite, you don't love baseball.

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