

# On Rosh Hashanah, A WWII hero and Hall of Fame Slugger

by Joe Guzzardi

Simply put, Hank Greenberg is the most prodigious Jewish Major League Baseball slugger ever. Greenberg's .313 career batting average, two MVP awards and four AL home run and RBI titles earned the 12-year Detroit Tigers' first baseman a Hall of Fame plaque in 1956 as the first Jew to enter Cooperstown. Had Greenberg not lost the entire 1942-1944 seasons, about 2,000 at bats missed during his peak performance years, Hank's totals would have been loftier. Few sacrificed a larger percentage of their careers to serve and protect their country than Greenberg. Hank played for nine and a half seasons, and was in uniform for four and a half years. Had Greenberg played during those war years, Sabermetrics indicates that he would have ended his career with 525 homers and 550 RBIs, instead of 331 and 1,274. Greenberg always excelled athletically. At the Bronx's James Madison High School, the 6'4" Greenberg dominated in baseball, basketball and soccer. After a year at New York University, in 1929 Greenberg signed with the Tigers for \$9,000. Hank quickly worked his way through the minors with stops in Hartford, Evansville and Beaumont. By September 1930, Greenberg was up for a cup of coffee with the Tigers, then hit .301 in his 1931 rookie season. By 1935, he was the American League's MVP, helping steer the Tigers to the World Series title. In 1938, Greenberg's 58 home runs were just

two shy of Babe Ruth's then-record. Greenberg achieved his diamond feats even though once outside the heavily Jewish Bronx, he was targeted for anti-Semitic, Jew-baiting slurs. Few were more vociferous than Detroit's Henry Ford who blamed Jews for problems in the U.S. and Europe. Throughout his career, Greenberg played baseball on the Sabbath, but never on the High Holy Days, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. But in 1934, with the Tigers clinging to a narrow lead over the surging New York Yankees, a crucial game fell on Rosh Hashanah. Torn between his faith and his teammates, Greenberg, after consulting a rabbi, chose to play. Hank socked two homers to lead the Tigers to a 2-1 victory. While Greenberg may have been conflicted about playing ball on High Holy Days, he had no reservations about enlisting to defend his country. In his book "Baseball in Wartime," Gary Bedingfield wrote that after Greenberg was drafted in 1941, he was honorably discharged when Congress released servicemen age 28 years and older. After Pearl Harbor, Sergeant Greenberg volunteered to join the U.S. Army Air Corps. "We are in trouble," Greenberg told The Sporting News, "and there is only one thing for me to do - return to the service." Greenberg predicted, incorrectly, that his enlistment meant the end of his baseball days, and that he was leaving the game with a "pang." Assigned to the first Boeing B-29 Superfortresses' group to go overseas, Greenberg spent 1944

flying in the India-China-Burma theater. On July 1, 1945, Greenberg returned to Detroit's starting lineup, and before 47,729 fans, homered to lead the Tigers over the Philadelphia A's, 9-5. Greenberg's presence in the daily lineup propelled the Tigers to a come-from-behind A.L. pennant. Greenberg kept on slugging. In 1946, he led the league with 44 home runs and 127 RBIs. After a contract dispute, Greenberg spent his final 1947 season with the Pittsburgh Pirates. After his retirement, Greenberg inexplicably fell short for Hall of Fame induction for nine consecutive years until Cooperstown elected him in 1956. In 1986, at age 75, Greenberg, an American patriot, baseball superstar and inspiration to Christians and Jews alike, died from liver cancer. Before Greenberg passed, he wrote his wife Mary Jo a love letter that he stored in a safe deposit box for her to read after his death. When Mary Jo gathered the emotional strength to open Hank's letter, she read his words of thankfulness to God that for 25 years he had been blessed with her devoted companionship, and of his gratitude for his Detroit Tigers' heyday. Greenberg left Mary Jo this message: "Shed no tear for me...I've had a wonderful life, filled with personal success, and good health."



## Immigration a top issue again ahead of the midterms

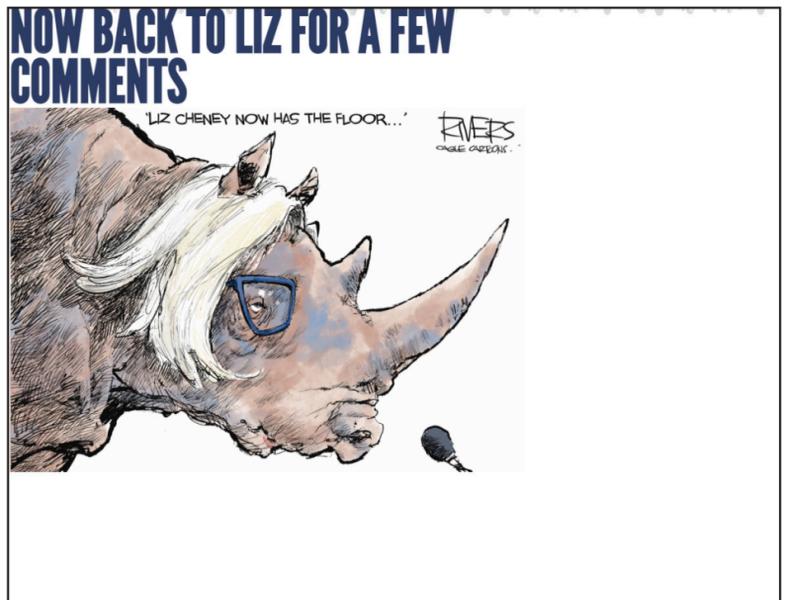
Immigration has muscled its way into the top four issues in the midterm elections, joining inflation, cost of living, violent crime and abortion rights as potential turning points in the control of Congress. Its emergence has come amid accusations of hypocrisy and inhumane treatment, as well as threats of criminal investigations. The arrival on Martha's Vineyard of 50 immigrants on planes sent by Florida's Republican governor Ron DeSantis ignited all-out war on social and traditional media, momentarily eclipsing the more dominant issues of the past several months and undercutting President Biden's increasingly favorable public approval numbers. In sending the migrants to the island off the Massachusetts coast, DeSantis joined Republican governors of Texas and Arizona, who have sent 13,000 immigrants since April on buses to New York City, Washington, D.C. and Chicago - all self-declared sanctuary cities led by Democrats - to protest the administrations' failure to control illegal border crossings. While the governors have routinely been criticized by Democrats for their immigrant relocation policies, it was the migrants' arrival on Martha's Vineyard that exploded across the country and produced the rancorous response, including demands that criminal charges be lodged against the chief executives. The governors and their supporters accused opponents of hypocrisy for boasting their cities were sanctuaries and welcom-

ing to immigrants, only to demand millions in federal assistance to meet the cost of accommodating them, contending they were ill equipped to manage the influx or by sending them to neighboring communities. The Republican governors' message couldn't have been more direct: The noble motives and virtue signaling of elitist Democrats existed only while illegal immigration was confined to the border states, collapsing quickly when it came to their cities. While the White House was quick to join the condemnation of the governors' actions, it drew increased focus to its record in dealing with the crisis at the southern border. The administration was not helped by the demonstrably false assertion by Vice President Kamala Harris that the border was secure. Within days of her comment, U. S. Customs and Border Protection announced 2.1 million border encounters in the last year - the highest number in history. Undaunted, press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre repeated Harris' claim and - like Harris - argued the previous administration was responsible. Democrats were nearly unanimous in condemning the governors, accusing them of cruelty, guilty of human trafficking and using innocent individuals fleeing violence and official corruption in their native countries as political pawns. No evidence to support trafficking allegations has surfaced yet and there is little Democrats can do to block further transporting migrants to northern cities. The governors have insisted co-

ercion has not been used, that migrants voluntarily board buses or planes to be re-located and that no laws have been broken. The impact on the financial and social welfare resources of border communities has been crushing according to the governors, forced to bear the burden of caring for and accommodating thousands of migrants but lacking the wherewithal to do so adequately. The rise in the flow of illegal drugs across the border has added significantly to the difficulties faced by the border towns and elsewhere by narcotics distribution networks. Partisan politics are certainly at play in the governors' actions but engaging in it is a practice familiar to both parties and on a great many conflicting issues. If the issue of immigration reform is to be addressed comprehensively and fairly, though, Democrats and Republicans must lay down their rhetorical weapons and actions and commit to finding a solution. Packing families in buses or planes and sending them to distant parts of the nation to score political points accomplishes nothing toward an answer. At the same time, embracing a policy of denial robs the administration of credibility and suggests it is indifferent to the plight of migrants and unable to offer a viable solution. The emergence of immigration as a factor in an election only seven weeks off should be sufficient incentive to deal with it in a manner it deserves.



**Want your voice heard?**  
Send letters to [editor@myweekly-sentinel.com](mailto:editor@myweekly-sentinel.com)



**The Canton Independent-Sentinel**  
**Incorporating the Troy Gazette-Register, LLC**  
P.O. BOX 128, 18 Troy Street, Canton, Pa. 17724 • Phone: 570-673-5151  
FAX: 570-673-5152 • Email: [editor@myweeklysentinel.com](mailto:editor@myweeklysentinel.com) • USPS 088-740  
Published every Thursday with Second Class Mail at Canton, Pa. 17724. POSTMASTER: If Undeliverable please send form 3547 to Independent-Sentinel, Box 128, Canton, Pa. 17724

**Subscription Rates**  
12 Months/In Coverage Area - \$73 Out of Coverage Area - \$77  
All Subscriptions include online viewing.  
**STAFF:**  
Joe Carreon, Publisher & Editor  
Sherry Lambert, Reporter  
Janie Riggs, Office Assistant • Amanda Carreon Business Manager