

# is revealed as scammer-abilia king

watch them from a two-way mirror to see whether they stole anything.

Sports Illustrated crowned him “The Sultan of Swap.”

In September 1999, after Major League Baseball purchased part of the collection for \$7.5 million and donated most of it to Cooperstown, the Hall of Fame unveiled the “Barry Halper Gallery.” Said Commissioner Selig, “This important baseball collection belongs in the Hall of Fame, and that is where it will be for all time.”

**B**UT soon after the sale, doubts about its legitimacy cropped up at a collectors convention, where the Hall showed off its acquisition. “I was absolutely floored at how much of it was fake,” said auctioneer Josh Evans. “There were several early jerseys I saw, and all of them were no good.”

Meanwhile, the shrine had launched an internal investigation, asking a textile expert to examine the fabric of some of the 19th-century uniforms and concluding that not all were kosher. Curators ultimately decided to not exhibit some items and returned them to Halper.

But it didn't stop there. The autograph Halper said he got from The Babe in 1948 was deemed a forgery. The same went for Ruth's letter authenticating his alleged lock of hair. (The hair itself was bogus, too, Ruth's granddaughter claims.)

In 2007, autograph expert Ron Keurajian alerted the Hall to concerns regarding Halper's Ty Cobb diary. The shrine reached out to the FBI, which put its own analyst on the case and in 2009 concluded that the diary was most likely written by Stump, the biographer.

Ron Cobb, a board member at the Ty Cobb Museum in Royston, Ga., and author of an exposé on Harper's collection, “Stumped by the Storyteller,” established that Ty Cobb's mother shot his father with a pistol, not with the shotgun Halper owned.

Halper's claim of having played for Jimmie Foxx at the University of Miami turned out to be fiction: Halper never took the field for the Hurricanes, and Foxx was no longer the coach when Halper arrived at the school in 1957. The signatures of Foxx and Ruth appear forged.

His alleged 1846 Knickerbocker baseball may be a phony; experts say it's the wrong size for the pe-

Tests showed the White Sox logo contained acrylic dye that was created in 1941, and the fibers used to affix it to the jersey were made of a polyester not introduced until the 1950s. All of which made Halper's tale of acquiring it directly from Jackson's widow at her home in the 1950s impossible.

Since last fall, Halper's collection has been scrutinized closely, only to reveal more items that were inauthentic, fraudulent or stolen. In all, about 10 percent of the items sold through Sotheby's are presumed fake.

The question now: Should Halper's name still be a part of the Hall of Fame?

Absolutely not, said Ron Cobb.

“Through this deceit he enriched his reputation, his wallet and his own ego,” he said. “There is no place for someone with a flaw like this in the Hall of Fame.”

Ex-Commissioner Fay Vincent agreed: “I do not think he deserves the honor.”

Jason Halper, Barry's son, says his father had a reputation for honesty and integrity that was “second to none.”

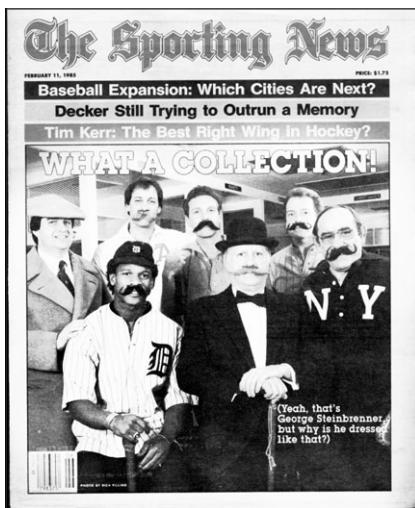
“He assembled the greatest private collection of baseball memorabilia in the world — a collection that literally included over a million items. With so many items ... it would be surprising if there wasn't an authenticity issue here or there over the years.”

Collector Chris Sullivan considers himself a Halper victim after he bought a purported 1907 jersey of Boston third baseman Jimmy Collins for \$31,000 in 1999. He now knows it's a fake — it's not even the right color.

Sullivan, a Red Sox fan fleeced by a Yankee owner, is considering suing Halper's estate.

“It seems like Barry Halper was the Madoff of memorabilia,” he said.

Author Peter Nash writes for *haulsofshame.com* and is at work on the upcoming “Hauls of Shame: The Cooperstown Conspiracy and the Madoff of Memorabilia.”



**DUDS:** Rickey Henderson, George Steinbrenner and Yogi Berra don “vintage” pieces on a 1985 Sporting News. Rich Pilling

riod. What's clear is that the letter that accompanied it in the Sotheby's sale — the two items together fetched \$139,000 — was stolen from archives in Hawaii.

Mantle's 1951 rookie jersey, which MLB bought from Halper for the Hall of Fame, was at some point quietly returned to the collector because it was not real — the font for the number was off, and the jersey's buttons were in the wrong spot.

This despite Mantle having signed the jersey on camera and scrawling a note to Halper that read: “To Barry, This is my rookie uniform. I wore No. 6 for the first half of the season.”

One of the most valuable pieces, Ruth's rookie Red Sox jersey — by itself worth more than \$1 million — was exposed as a fake, as the manufacturer was wrong.

But perhaps the biggest blow came in October of last year, when the Hall made a shocking announcement: Halper's “Shoeless” Joe Jackson jersey was also a phony.

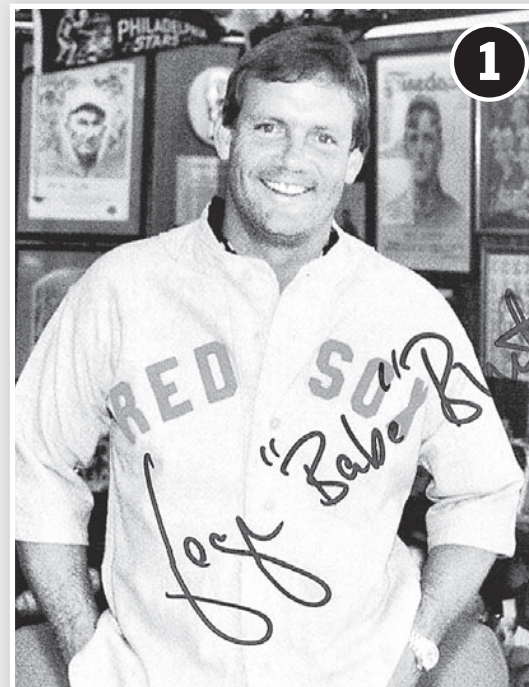
## ‘Legends’ of the diamond

Discredited items from Barry Halper's baseball memorabilia collection.

### 1 Babe Ruth's 1914 rookie Red Sox jersey

■ **Price:** About \$1 million

■ **What gave it away:** Halper says he got it from the daughter of a former Red Sox player — who never had any children. Wrong manufacturer. Jersey is from Spalding, not the firm that made Boston's uniforms.



### 2 Lou Gehrig's “last glove” of his final game on April 30, 1939, ending his consecutive-games streak at 2,130

■ **Price:** \$387,500, reportedly paid by Penny Marshall

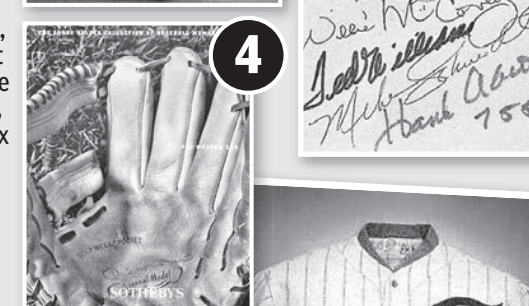
■ **What gave it away:** Halper's tale of getting it from Gehrig's replacement doesn't stand up, an expert found. Rival glove in Cooperstown from the Iron Horse's mom matches photos and descriptions of mitt.



### 3 Paper with autographs of all 15 major leaguers with 500 or more career home runs as of 1999, started when Halper purportedly snagged the signatures of Babe Ruth, Jimmie Foxx and Mel Ott

■ **Price:** \$51,000, sold in 1999

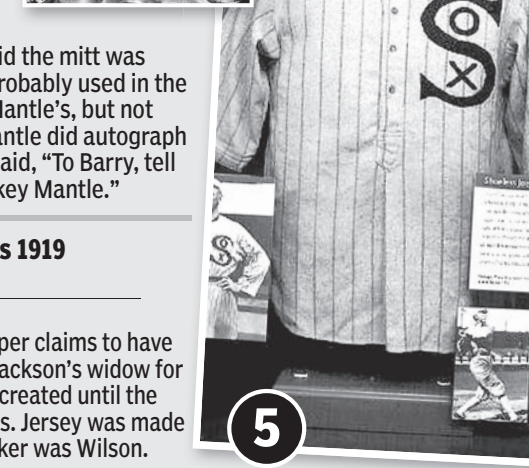
■ **What gave it away:** The Ruth and Foxx autographs are forgeries, experts say. Halper claimed he got Foxx to sign when he played for the slugger at the University of Miami, but he was never on the team. Foxx had left the school by the time Halper arrived in 1957.



### 4 Mickey Mantle's 1960 glove

■ **Price:** \$239,000, paid by Billy Crystal

■ **What gave it away:** Rawlings said the mitt was made in 1964 at the earliest and probably used in the 1966 season. It might have been Mantle's, but not during the famed 1960 season. Mantle did autograph the mitt, along with a photo that said, “To Barry, tell me you didn't steal my glove, Mickey Mantle.”



### 5 “Shoeless” Joe Jackson's 1919 “Black Sox” jersey

■ **Price:** About \$1 million

■ **What gave it away:** Although Halper claims to have bought the White Sox jersey from Jackson's widow for \$150, dye in the team logo was not created until the 1940s and stitching not till the 1950s. Jersey was made by Spalding; Chicago's uniform maker was Wilson.