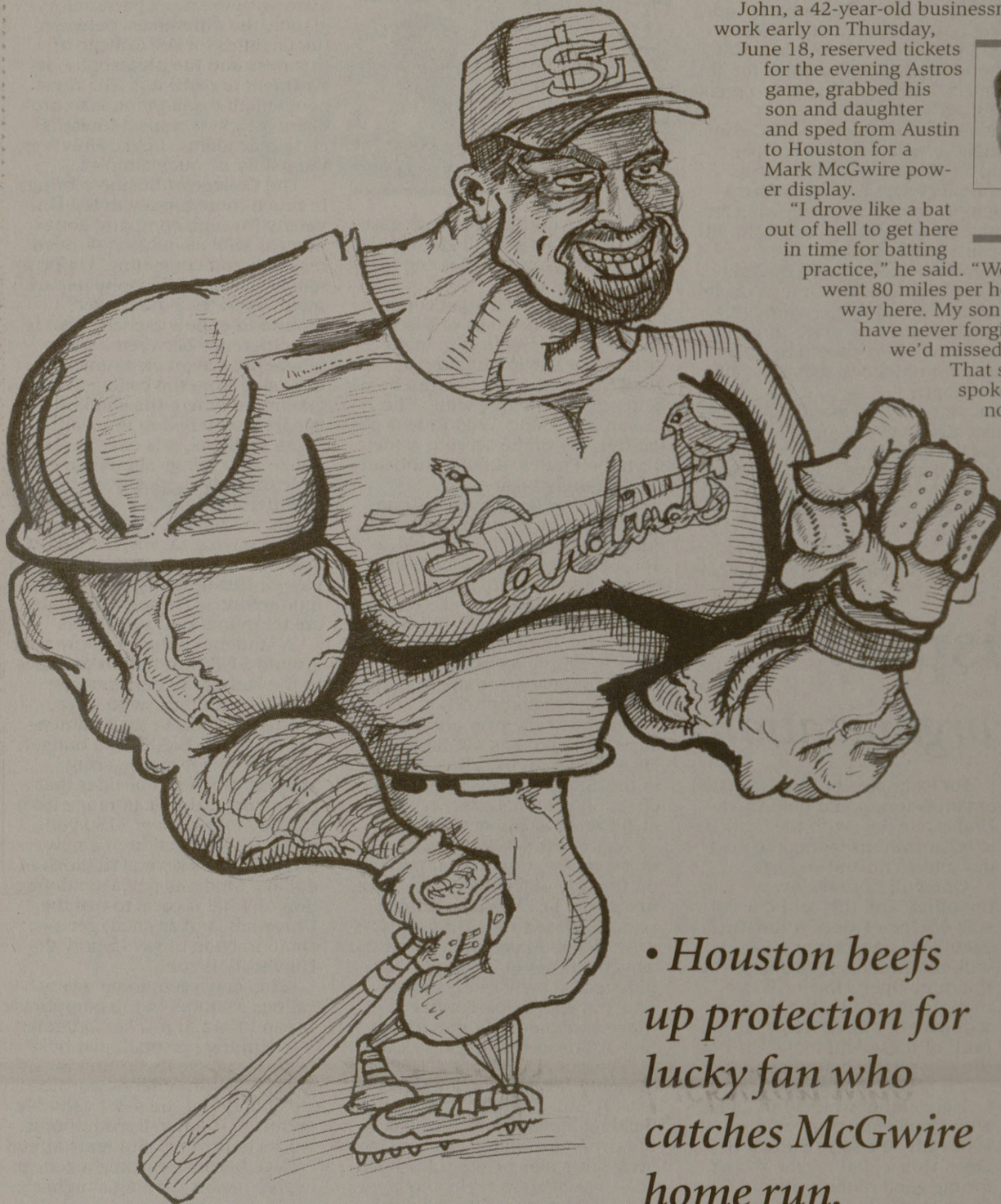


The Big Show: McGwire's home run bin



BRAD GRAEBER/THE BATTALION

Call it the "McGwire Effect." John, a 42-year-old businessman, left work early on Thursday, June 18, reserved tickets for the evening Astros game, grabbed his son and daughter and sped from Austin to Houston for a Mark McGwire power display.

"I drove like a bat out of hell to get here in time for batting practice," he said. "We probably went 80 miles per hour all the way here. My son would have never forgiven me if we'd missed it."

That son he spoke of was nowhere to be found.



JEFF WEBB

"Oh," he said. "He's in the outfield hoping to get a ball."

Smart kid. When McGwire strutted to the plate for "BP," the hush reserved for the singles and foul balls hit by other batters grew to an deafening din for the red-headed batsman.

People in line for concessions vacated their places for a glimpse, lowering their necks under the overhang to actually see where those monsters were landing.

One pitch equaled one ball muscled into the upper deck, just three rows below the massive lighted Enron ad in the upper deck of left field.

That ball had some company as "Big Mac" parked four more homers in the same vicinity.

Robert, a long-time Astros fan and autograph seeker, sat three seats down from John.

"That's the furthest I've ever seen anybody clobber a ball," Robert said. "I've been coming to games here for 24 years, and that's the biggest disservice I've ever seen done to a baseball."

The unofficial home run count for the day's practice was 14, leaving many spectators feeling their price of admission was fulfilled, the game a mere added bonus.

"I've never seen anything like that in my entire life," John said. "I hope my son got one."

The boy returned empty-handed, brimming with excitement. He recounted the whole session, a monstrous whack.

However, the best part of the day was yet to come.

In the fifth inning, Astros pitcher Reynolds stared down McGwire, no one out.

It's amazing how McGwire can mistake into a thing of beauty.

Reynolds hung a curve ball over the plate and approximately 100 feet later, the ball landed.

Three rows in front of the upper deck Enron ad in left field. Sound?

Number 33. History in the making, what you will, but it was simply a block to the monument of power wire has been constructing all season.

The upcoming weekend series between the Astros and Cardinals is sold out.

The only tickets left are general admission seats that go on sale at the end of the game. The lines will probably be there by midnight.

Want some advice? Skip class and go to a touring part of history. You will

Jeff Webb is a senior junior

• *Houston beefs up protection for lucky fan who catches McGwire home run.*

Astrodome increases security

HOUSTON (AP) — Mark McGwire is so hot he might very well hit history-making homer No. 62 before he and the St. Louis Cardinals arrive in Houston next week.

But the Astrodome is bracing just in case.

"They are going to have extra security," Astros spokeswoman Alyson Footer said Thursday. "Once the person catches that ball, that person will be pretty well protected."

McGwire has seven games to pass Roger Maris' single-season record of 61 home runs before the Cardinals begin a weekend series here next Friday.

On Thursday, his tally stood at 59 after he hit two home runs Tuesday and another two Wednesday at Florida.

McGwire plays his next five games at home against the Cincinnati Reds and Chicago Cubs, then his Cardinals travel to Cincinnati for two

more before moving on to Houston.

As if the melee for No. 62 is not going to be hectic enough, whenever it occurs, officials fear that reported offers in excess of \$1 million for the historic piece of rawhide will intensify the fan scramble.

The Astros plan to have extra security guards stationed in the outfield stands just in case that scramble happens here.

"It could be scary," Footer said. "If they're not careful, there could be serious riots out there."

The highest reported local offer for the ball has come from furniture mogul Jim "Mattress Mac" McIngvale, who says a representative will be on hand next weekend to offer the lucky fan a \$500,000 check on the spot.

Also, McIngvale said, the ball must be caught "in a sportsmanlike manner."

The purchase would be for pro-

motional purposes.

If he can't get it, he might try by selling the ball to a collector, said he'd consider it to display it at the ballpark, set to open next year.

"It would be an honor of Houston sports history," he said.

All reserved seats in the stadium have been snapped up. In the 3,000 general admission seats in center field — the house — might be the choicest spots next week.

The Astros expect to form early in the morning, which do not open until 9 a.m. each game. If a fan still will be magnanimous and still has not hit the ball, Footer said.

sonnel accustomed to the game from sneaking in by the way of a pocket of hard-backs will have the opposite

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Thursday, Sept. 10 Professional Rush 8:00 - 10:00 p.m. MSC, Room 292 Professional Attire	Friday, Sept. 11 Social Rush Time & Place TBA by invitation only

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