

**Another Darned Dilemma**  
**By**  
**Daniel E. White October 13, 2025**

The 2025 Major League Baseball season is nearly over. A vexing question lingers. Should Pete Rose be elected to the baseball Hall of Fame?

For those of you to whom the question has not occurred before, the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York exists to honor those who have excelled playing the game, managing teams, or even broadcasting the games. Pete Rose had more base hits in his career than any other player, 4256. In second place is Ty Cobb with 4191.

Ty Cobb was an avowed racist who, it is said, sharpened his cleats so that his shoes became weapons whenever he slid into a base. He was one of the first group of players to be elected to the Hall of Fame in 1939, its first year, winning more votes than any other player.

Pete Rose bet on baseball games, sometimes even ones in which his team was involved. Major League Baseball Commissioner Bart Giamatti ordered an investigation in 1989 which concluded that Rose had placed bets many times and banned Rose from baseball for life. The ban included exclusion from the Hall of Fame.

Recently, the current Commissioner, Rob Manfred, lifted the ban because Rose had died, and the ban was for “lifetime.” So, the debate began: should the man with the most hits ever in MLB be included in the institution founded to recognize the best performers in the history of the game?

The underlying question: how much of what kind of behavior disqualifies a person from being recognized for outstanding achievement?

Lest one think that such a question is a new one in human history, the Biblical story of David and Bathsheba is set in times well “Before the Common Era,” or, as that part of history was known for most of my life, B.C. The story features sordid behavior, abuse of power, sex, violence, repentance: all the elements of a tale made for Hollywood.

For those of you who have not recently read the Old Testament book of second Samuel, the storyline is simple. David, the King, wanted to have sex with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite, a soldier in service to the King. David’s army was at war. The King arranged for Uriah to be assigned to a position in the battle where he was sure to be killed. And Uriah was.

David had his way with Bathsheba, their affair producing a son. When word reached them that Uriah was dead, they married and had more sons. The prophet, Nathan, condemned the King for two sins, adultery and murder, and demanded that David repent his sins. David did. Generations later, Jesus of Nazareth was born “into the House of David.” King David’s place in history was enhanced.

Where the stories diverge? King David clearly repented. Pete Rose? Sorta.

Another pair of stories. John James Audubon was so influential in the cataloging of bird species and, by virtue of his publications, stimulating countless others to take up their binoculars, get outside, and watch birds. The pre-eminent birding non-profit organization in the United States bears his name: the Audubon Society.

Audubon owed slaves during his lifetime. The Tucson branch of the Audubon Society decided to change its name to the Tucson Birding Alliance. The new name will, no doubt, catch on with members in the future. But those of us of a certain age still refer to the Audubon Society with no intent of disrespect. I doubt any of us who stumble over the new name would, in ANY way, condone slavery or regard any aspect of slavery as praiseworthy.

Thomas Jefferson was the third President of the United States and principal author of the Declaration of Independence. The Jefferson Memorial, built in his honor, is a powerful place to visit with the imposing statue of Jefferson and several of his most eloquent quotes inscribed on the walls.

He owed a lot of slaves and, in fact, sired children with a woman he owned as a slave. Do those facts negate his many contributions to the history of our nation?

Perhaps circumstances matter. Barry Bonds hit the most home runs ever in Major League Baseball history, 762. He also hit the most home runs in a single season, 73. The previous record was 755, held by Hank Aaron. Before Aaron, the record belonged to Babe Ruth: 714.

Both Ruth and Aaron were easily elected to the Hall of Fame after they achieved their respective records. Because enough people believe that Bonds used performance-enhancing drugs, which were illegal, to achieve his record, he has not been elected and probably will not be. There never has been a suspicion that either Aaron or Ruth used any performance-enhancing substance.

So, because Bonds is believed to have cheated his way to the record, he is out. Rose did not cheat his way to 4256 hits.

Major League Baseball and life as we know it will survive whether or not Rose gets into the Hall. I doubt that human beings will stop making decisions about whether or not to award honors based on their judgments about a person’s character worthiness. The rationales upon which judgments are made will likely always reflect the values of the times in which the determinations are made.

It would be silly to think that there will be consistency about how much of what kind of behavior disqualifies a person from being recognized for outstanding achievement.

Just another darned dilemma.

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