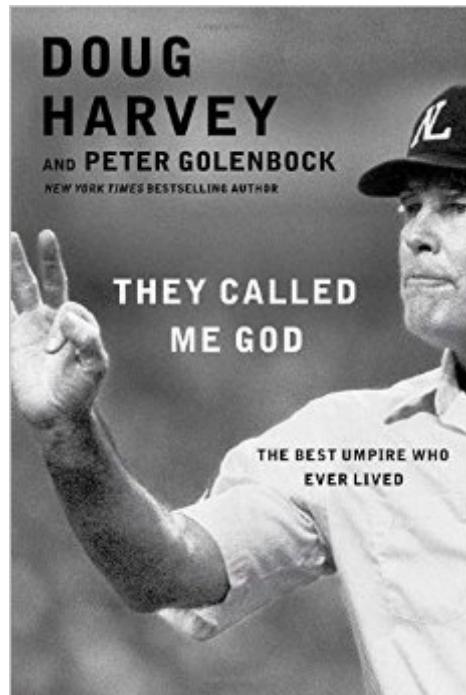


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# They Called Me God: The Best Umpire Who Ever Lived



## Synopsis

The incredible memoir from the man voted one of the "Best Umpires of All Time" by the Society of American Baseball Research is filled with more than three decades of fascinating baseball stories. Doug Harvey was a California farm boy, a high school athlete who nevertheless knew that what he really wanted was to become an unsung hero—a major league umpire. Working his way through the minor leagues, earning three hundred dollars a month, he survived just about everything, even riots in stadiums in Puerto Rico. And while players and other umps hit the bars at night, Harvey memorized the rule book. In 1962, he broke into the big leagues and was soon listening to rookie Pete Rose worrying that he would be cut by the Reds and laying down the law with managers such as Tommy Lasorda and Joe Torre. This colorful memoir takes you behind the plate for some of baseball's most memorable moments, including Roberto Clemente's three thousandth and final hit; the heroic three-and-two pinch-hit home run by Kirk Gibson in the 1988 World Series; and the nail-biting excitement of the 1968 World Series. But beyond the drama, Harvey turned umpiring into an art. He was a man so respected, whose calls were so feared and infallible, that the players called him "God." And through it all, he lived by three rules: never take anything from a player, never back down from a call, and never carry a grudge. A book for anyone who loves baseball, *They Called Me God* is a funny and fascinating tale of on- and off-the-field action, peopled by unforgettable characters from Bob Gibson to Nolan Ryan, and a treatise on good umpiring techniques. In a memoir that transcends the sport, Doug Harvey tells a gripping story of responsibility, fairness, and honesty.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

They Called Me God: The Best Umpire Who Ever Lived by Doug Harvey with Peter Golenbock (Gallery Books: Simon & Schuster, 2014, 288 pages, \$27.00) is a very episodic collection of sometimes quite interesting tales of baseball which would frequently benefit from the help of quality co- (read ghost) writing superior to that provided by Peter Golenbock, although, if Harvey is to be taken at his word, he's not a man to be argued with or to negotiate on an even playing field. Harvey, who was active as a major league umpire from 1962 to 1992, has been inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame, and been voted the second best umpire, behind Bill Klem, of all time. The book is filled with Harvey's assessment of ball players, managers, and fellow umpires based largely on their deportment on and off the field as well as the degree to which they easily bent themselves to his enormous will and sense of himself. Players and managers who learned not to argue or to do so according to Harvey's set of rules come off looking pretty good, while those who gave him a great deal of difficulty are hammered. Similarly, umpires who bent to his or agreed with his standards for umpiring come across as being good officials, although none but a couple of his mentors ever measure up to him. Harvey's egotism and his sense of his own correctness dominate the book. He frequently asserts his fairness and his willingness not to carry grudges, while his stories emphasize the cost to players, managers, and the game of his propensity to get even. I'm unsure whether these marked contrasts represent his lack of self-awareness or the depth of his hypocrisy. Doug Harvey grew up in the poverty of the Imperial Valley of California during the great depression. His father worked hard to maintain a hard-scrabble existence.

Doug Harvey umpired for 31 years (1962-1992) in the National League, spanning 4,673 games. He's one of only 10 umpires in the Hall of Fame. Harvey, famous for his nickname 'God,' says, "I don't believe I ever made a wrong call." Harvey, who didn't attend umpire school or have any connections in the major leagues, started at Class C for \$250 a month and made it to the major leagues within four years, faster than any other umpire. Harvey was known for always emphasizing integrity and fairness, memorizing the rule book word for word and not taking much crap from players or managers. If they called him anything besides his name, ump or mister, they were quickly ejected. "We don't ask for respect, we demand it," he says. Harvey advocated staying calm (give the manager or player 20 seconds to spout off), listen to whoever's complaining and then make them listen to you, and don't let anyone get in your face. He says he gave managers and players the option of being ejected. He warned them that if they persisted, they would be ejected. It was their choice. Umpires are the only thing that stand between fairness and chaos. And, umpires are part of the game to make sure neither team has an unfair advantage. Harvey maintains that baseball

wouldn't survive without umpires. Here are some of Harvey's other observations; Frank Robinson: "Toughest player I ever faced." Fred Hutchinson: "Toughest manager and all the umps despised him." Walt Alston: "Most respect for any man I umped for." Bruce Bochy: "Best manager in the game today." Sandy Koufax: "Best pitcher I ever saw." Pete Rose: "Most intense player."

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