

# James “Uncle Jimmy” Micioni - Recognizing One of the Greatest Baseball Fans and Card Collectors of All-Time

After almost one year of sorting through and auctioning the collection of James “Uncle Jimmy” Micioni, we wanted to take this time to recognize the story of perhaps the greatest baseball fan and card collector that has ever been memorialized. James “Uncle Jimmy” Micioni passed away on March 8, 2020 at the young age of 97, and we’ve come to learn that he witnessed some of the greatest baseball legends and moments across 10 decades. He also wrote to those same baseball legends, often sharing his memories with them and requesting an autograph on one of his cards, newspaper clippings, or photos. The lifelong Boonton, New Jersey resident spent his entire life in one home. While never married, he was very close to family, living with his sister (94 years old when Jimmy passed) for decades and being a large part of the lives of his 7 nieces and nephews and their children. The team at Wheatland Auction Services would like to thank Uncle Jimmy and his entire family for allowing us to take part in the discovery process of this collection. It has reminded each of us about the greatness of the



history of baseball in America, and why so many of us fell in love with the game and the baseball legends that we have come to admire. Card collecting is more than a hobby to most of us, and Uncle Jimmy epitomized what it truly means to be a lifelong passionate baseball card collector. The story of the person behind this collection needed to be shared with everyone, and has touched the hearts of many sports fans, card collectors, and even the everyday person not following sports. We’ve heard from people across the world who have been touched by the story of a kind, blue collar, World War 2 veteran who loved baseball, and passed on a valuable collection to family so that their lives could be positively impacted. The positive impact has resonated across the world in the hearts and minds of many people.

In what has been deemed the "Uncle Jimmy" collection, a very valuable and never-before seen baseball card and memorabilia collection took the industry by storm in 2020 and has continued to offer an opportunity for other fans to partake in obtaining items from his collection. Uncle Jimmy left his family with a house-full of baseball cards, autographs, photos, pins, and collectibles that he personally acquired from the 1930s through 2020. These were amazingly well-stored cards



and collectibles amassed over 10 decades by Uncle Jimmy. Some of the first items to be graded and authenticated by PSA/DNA included 6 Babe Ruth autographed 1933 Goudey baseball cards in beautiful condition. These exceptional baseball treasures were found in binders and photo albums in Uncle Jimmy's attic along with hundreds of other signed 1933 and 1934 Goudey cards, including Lou Gehrig, Jimmie Foxx, and dozens of other hall of famers. The first 5 Babe Ruth cards and 4 signed Lou Gehrig cards sold at auction in 2020 for over \$2 Million and the first 4 auctions amassed nearly \$4 Million in value (with one auction to go!). The final Babe Ruth signed 1933 Goudey card is in the final auction of Uncle Jimmy's collection, which ends on Sunday February 21, 2021 via Wheatland Auction Services ([www.wheatlandauctionservices.com](http://www.wheatlandauctionservices.com)).

Uncle Jimmy spent his entire life collecting baseball items and writing to players, teams, baseball card manufacturers, other collectors, and even the baseball photographers. For each of his birthdays and for Christmas, Uncle Jimmy would instruct his nieces and nephews to only buy him stamps, writing paper, envelopes, or gift cards to his local baseball card store (we found the hand written gift instructions to prove this). While through the mail (TTM) autograph collecting, a

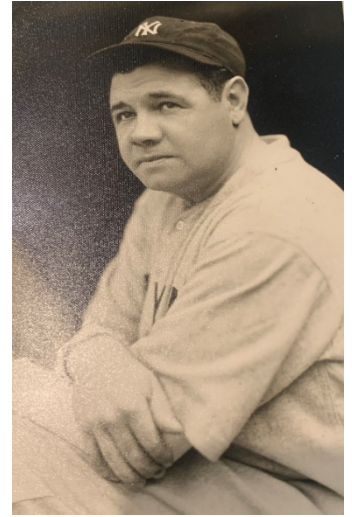


practice of writing to players requesting autographs and include self-addressed-stamped envelopes, became popular in the 1970s and 1980s, Uncle Jimmy mastered the practice in the 1930s through 1960s. Mailing baseball cards to players so they could sign and return them became a routine practice for him, and we even have his notes showing his daily mailings. He took time to write long, detailed letters to the players. He amassed hundreds upon hundreds of signed cards, including 1933 and 1934 Goudey baseball cards, Diamond Star cards, 1939-1941 Play Ball cards, and many more! Uncle Jimmy kept detailed notes on the letters he sent out, and also kept many of the return envelopes from the players, teams, sports photographers, and others who sent him items. Uncle

Jimmy had a deep appreciation for baseball legends, as he often stored his collectibles by player and the year they were inducted into the baseball hall of fame.



In addition to an amazing signed baseball card collection, he also collected original photographs, including some of the most iconic Type 1 photo poses of Ruth, Gehrig, DiMaggio, and Mantle. As the team at Wheatland Auction Services sorted through the items, they discovered some of the rarest Type 1 photos and quickly sent them off to the experts at PSA/DNA to be authenticated and encased. PSA/DNA photo experts even explained the background stories of some of the photos, including how a Gehrig photo was so well liked by Lou Gehrig himself, that it was his “go-to” photo of

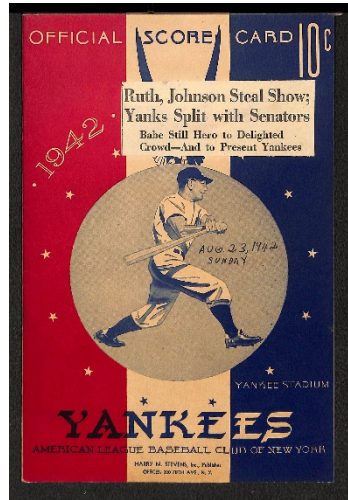


choice when he needed to supply one. There was also a 1936 Joe DiMaggio Type 1 photo that was used for his R312 rookie card. When his nieces cleaned out his house following Uncle Jimmy’s passing, the last items they took with them were hundreds of magazine cuts and photographs on his basement walls. Uncle Jimmy even had return envelopes from the famous sports photographers, including George Burke, George Brace, Don Wingfield, and others. We quickly realized that Uncle Jimmy frequently wrote to the great baseball photographers over many decades. Uncle Jimmy also collected any baseball hall of fame related regional baseball card or photo sets, as many of his card and photo sets were still in original envelopes or boxes.



Uncle Jimmy was a US Army World War II veteran and spent his entire life working as a factory worker and school custodian. His family and closest friends had no idea of the value of the collection that he passed on to 7 nieces and nephews and their children. Uncle Jimmy didn’t collect cards, autographs, programs, tickets, books, pins, and other material for the present or future value of them. He collected because he absolutely loved baseball and adored the legends that he watched in person as a youth and through adulthood, including Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, Jackie Robinson, Mickey Mantle, Willie Mays, and more! Since Uncle Jimmy never owned a car, his family had no idea that he spent many days and nights of his life taking a train from Boonton, NJ to see baseball games in New York, to watch the New York Yankees, Brooklyn Dodgers, and New York Giants.

Through sorting through his collection, the team at Wheatland Auction Services, based in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, was able to piece together some amazing moments of Uncle Jimmy's life, including many unknown to his family. By searching and sorting through tons (literally) of materials stored throughout the house, it was discovered

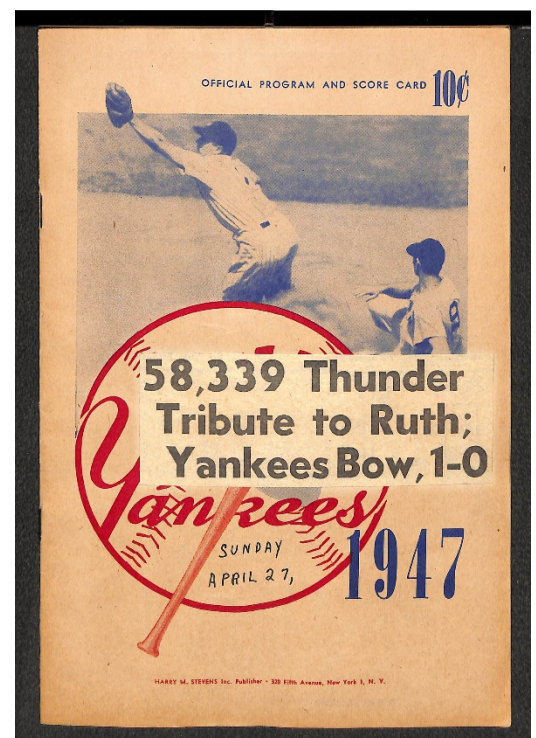


that Uncle Jimmy attended some of the greatest moments in baseball history. Before serving his country in World War II, Uncle Jimmy witnessed the amazing "War Benefit" baseball game on August 23, 1942 at Yankee stadium. Babe Ruth had retired in 1935 and Walter Johnson had retired in 1927, but they came together for a special event to raise money for the Army and Navy World War 2 Relief fund.



During his retirement, Babe watched many games and even suited up a few times. On August 23, 1942, he put on his uniform to raise money for the War Bonds benefit exhibition before the Yankees and Washington Senators played a doubleheader, and Uncle Jimmy was there. He put a memorable program together filled with newspaper clippings about the game, including images of Ruth and Johnson, and the original large ticket stub. He also wrote the game date on the cover. Before 69,136 fans at

Yankees stadium, Babe hit the first (and 21st) pitch Johnson threw into the right-field stands. With his second home run, the Babe showed the Stadium fans for the final time his distinctive home run trot! While affixing newspaper clippings to a score card usually devalues it, in this case you could consider the clippings an amazing addition to memorialize the special game where Yankees fans were able to watch one final home run trot of the home run hitting Yankees legend. The fact that Uncle Jimmy was in attendance and went through the trouble of adding the clippings to the score card shows you his love for baseball and the New York Yankees! Uncle Jimmy kept the program and ticket stub to the game and also attached newspaper clippings in the program about the fundraiser outcome of the game. Jimmy left for war service, spending a lot of time in France, as we discovered



by reviewing his collection of currency that he returned with as a keepsake. Shortly after he returned from service, he was at Yankee Stadium again, this time to honor Babe Ruth as the Yankees held a tribute to the Babe on April 27, 1947 as he was suffering from cancer. Babe gave a short speech to the over 58,000 fans who came to pay tribute to their legend. Babe was very sick with throat cancer and would pass away a few months later. Uncle Jimmy wrote the date on the cover, affixed the newspaper clippings throughout the score card, and taped the ticket stub inside the program.



Jimmy's stadium pins with player images also told a story, as he had pins noting "I'm rooting for Jackie Robinson" as Jackie broke the color barrier in baseball. He also had stadium pins that were rare variations, and even ones from Mickey Mantle's early career. He had ticket stubs to games where he witnessed Willie Mays' first home run, and many home runs in Mantle's rookie season.

As the Wheatland Auction Services team searched through tens of thousands of items, hundreds of autographed cards and news/magazine clippings, including high-quality condition hall of famers from the 1930s through 1960s, were discovered, along with pack-fresh vintage baseball card sets. As it turned out, this was only the beginning. One family member indicated "Uncle Jimmy spent most days of his life collecting cards and writing to players and teams. Most of my memories of Uncle Jimmy involved him discussing baseball and his love of his hobby."

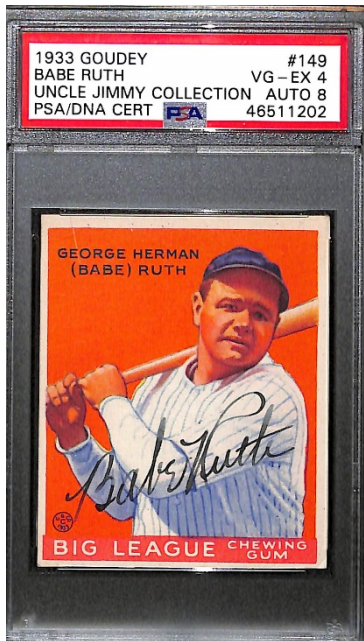
Every single box needed to be searched, as vintage cards were often stored with current day common cards.



Stacey Whisman, owner of Wheatland Auction Services, and her team in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, have spent “thousands of hours” sorting through this collection and consulting with Uncle Jimmy’s family. She stated that it was an amazing experience to sort through one baseball lover’s lifelong collection. “It was like taking a journey through Uncle Jimmy’s life. I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to guide the family and help them bring thousands of rare items to market across five auctions over the past year. Sorting and organizing this collection was like taking a walk through a baseball card museum. It was apparent that Uncle Jimmy loved baseball and collecting rare and high-quality cards was something he really cherished. We are so excited to bring these amazing treasures to current day collectors in a robust hobby.”

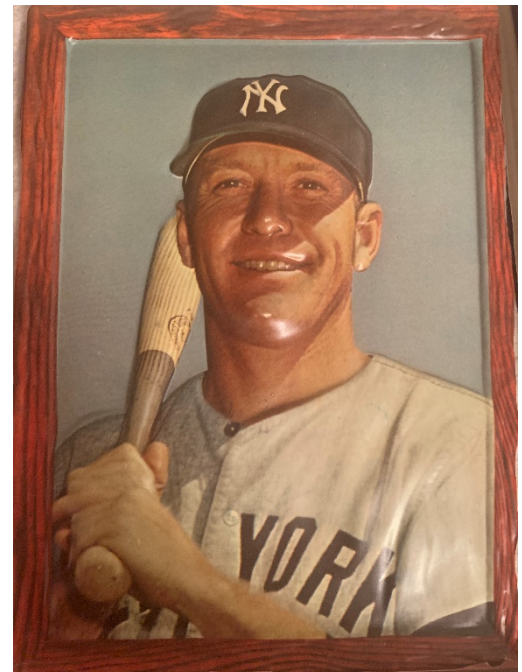


Thousands of baseball cards and autographs were sent to PSA and PSA/DNA to grade and/or certify thousands of cards. The team at Wheatland estimated that grading and authenticating the cards helping increase the total value of the collection by 1.5 million to 2 million dollars.



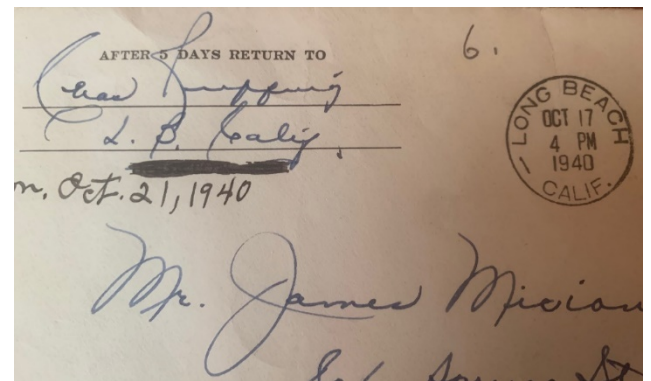
**On the left is a photo of one of the six signed Babe Ruth 1933 Goudey Cards in amazing condition! This card is currently for sale in the final Uncle Jimmy collection auction and may sell for over \$500,000.**

The collection has featured many rare cards of Uncle Jimmy’s favorite team, the New York Yankees, including rarities of Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, and Mickey Mantle. He even had a 1963 Topps redemption plastic wall plaque of Mickey Mantle – only two others have been known to ever come to market previously, according to our research.

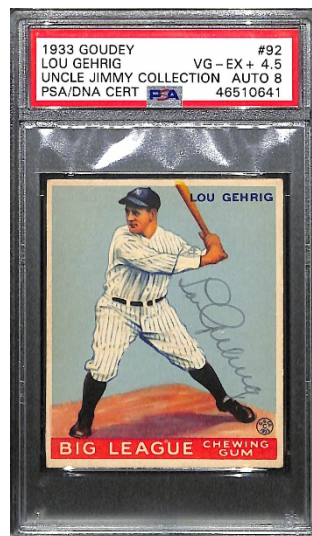
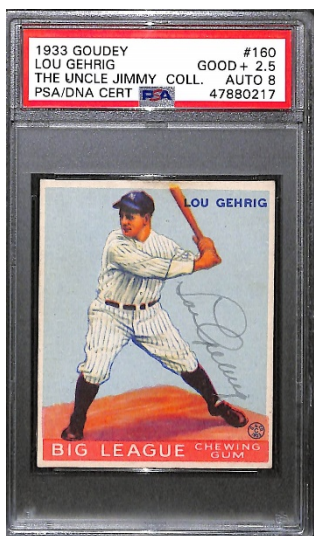


**On the right is an image of the rare 1963 Topps Mickey Mantle plastic plaque redemption.**

Chuck Whisman, a life-long sports card investor and advisor added “The Uncle Jimmy collection will go down in card history as one of the most amazing and previously-unknown collections that shocked industry experts. The more we sorted through his collection, the more our team deeply appreciated the vast greatness of this single collection and the decades of skilled work Uncle Jimmy put into his craft. The Babe Ruth autographed cards alone are like nothing I have ever seen in over 4 decades of collecting and advising sellers. They look like they were printed yesterday, as the bold colors on the artistic style of the 1933 and 1934 Goudeys pop out. Usually, if you are lucky enough to find an autographed Goudey card, the card is well worn, but this collection contained hundreds upon hundreds of pack-fresh cards with vividly bold autographs. Not a week goes by without a collector telling me how the Uncle Jimmy collection has inspired and touched them. People have called Stacey from all over the world just to talk about the collection. As the final auction is coming to a close, there is a bit of a sadness, from the stance of admiring a hall of fame collection and the awesome person behind it, as each auction has allowed us to tell more of the story.”



Bob Freedman of Simple Auction Site knows baseball cards, as he runs the auction platform for many major sports auction houses. Bob was fascinated as he learned more about the quality, value, and volume of newly discovered rare cards. “This is the find-of-a-lifetime! To find one collection this vast assembled by a single collector over decades and not to be seen by anyone else is an amazing find. “Also, to find such a near complete set of 1933 and 1934 Goudey cards signed is what every collector dreams about. The sheer breadth of the Goudey cards alone is unbelievable. Let alone factor in that the high-quality cards are boldly autographed by legends of baseball, including many hall of famers who played in the early 1900s.”

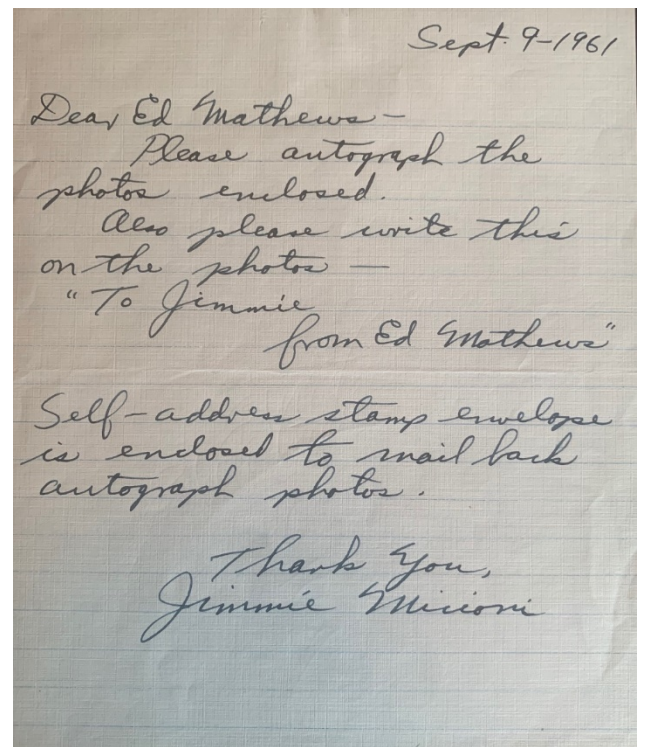
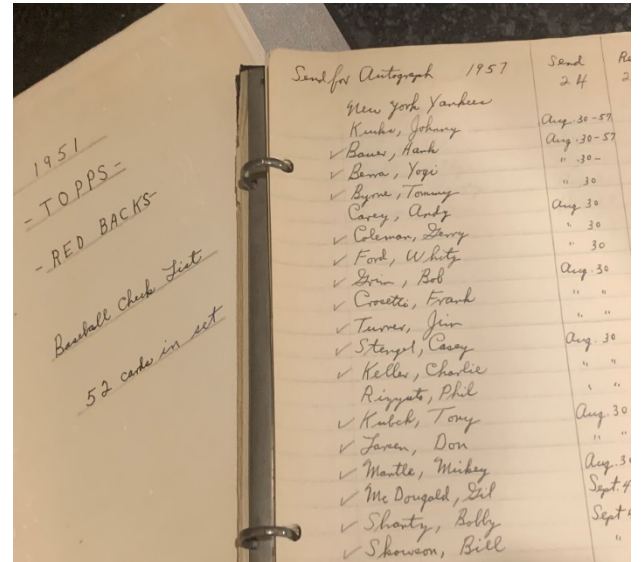


Uncle Jimmy's collection included hundreds of envelopes returned from legendary baseball players, photographers, and the teams and photographers that he wrote to. There was even a letter from the Yankees in response to Uncle Jimmy not being happy with the view from box seats he purchased for a game in the 1950s.

**The photo on the right shows a long list of baseball players that Uncle Jimmy sent letters and cards to on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 1957.**

Glyn Parson, a lifelong collector and well known dealer in the hobby was amazed when he found out about the collection, stating, "I have been dealing in sports cards since I was a kid in the late 1970s and quality-wise, this collection is up there as one of the best I've ever seen. You never see pack-fresh and vending box quality cards from the 1930s and up. Not just an amazing variety of mainstream sets, but also odd and regional sets that are in fantastic condition!". Parson indicated that it "Includes the nicest selections of Babe Ruth autographed cards that he has ever seen assembled by one owner."

Uncle Jimmy's love of America's favorite pastime was strong, as the many thousands of sports collectibles discovered throughout his home were only baseball related. He probably took the train from Boonton, New Jersey up to New York to see hundreds of Yankees, Dodgers, and Giants games over many decades. Within his collection, there was not one football, basketball, or hockey card or collectible to be found. Uncle Jimmy put sets together for every year - pulling cards fresh from




packs, so the value of unsigned cards could be amazing. He also put cards together by player and indicated the year they made the Hall of Fame - so a 1933 signed Dizzy Dean Goudey card could be found in a box of 1990s common cards. Uncle Jimmy's collection is definitely one of the most amazing collections to hit the market in many years and his love for baseball will now be enjoyed by many others! The quality of many of his sets and partial sets has been high, as many PSA 8, PSA 9, and PSA 10 examples were achieved through grading vintage cards in his sets.



**In closing, the team at Wheatland Auction Services would like to thank the wonderful family of Uncle Jimmy, especially his nieces and nephews, and their children.** First and foremost, their Uncle Jimmy has a special place in their hearts, and they are a very close family. They were always there for Uncle Jimmy his entire life, including over holidays, family birthdays, special events in their children's lives, and when he just needed to talk baseball! Uncle Jimmy is our honorary uncle, and yours too, and we've heard from hundreds of collectors and even non-collectors of how his story has touched them! He has invigorated our love of baseball and collecting cards. The sale of his estate has positively impacted many families and their children. It has even helped his grandnieces and grandnephews with college tuition and down payments on first homes, and somehow we have a feeling that he knew that may happen. We've also been able to donate proceeds in the name of Uncle Jimmy to local philanthropies helping families in need, including day care tuition at Lancaster Early Education Center so low-income parents can finish school and work to improve their situations, and local fine arts programs for kids who need something to do during this crazy pandemic. I think all of us needed this story at this moment as well! We'd also like to thank the thousands of collectors out there who have joined in the excitement of the story of Uncle Jimmy, including many of you who have been able to acquire a piece or two from his collection, as the story of Uncle Jimmy will remain with all of us forever. Finally, thank you Uncle Jimmy! Your love for baseball and card collecting is unmatched!

We asked Uncle Jimmy's family members about the person behind the collection:

- **From his nephew James:** "Jimmy was a quiet and private man that loved his family very much. Uncle Jimmy lived in the same house his entire life, never drove a car and walked everywhere he needed to go, which left him in incredible shape well into his 90's. He was always interested in showing parts of his collection that he was especially excited about anytime we visited him. Every year for Christmas, the only gifts he wanted was stamps, college-lined paper and envelopes so he could support his card collection. He loved Ring Dings and Entenmann's Cakes and although he was an avid gardener, he hated vegetables. I am a sports fanatic and visiting Uncle Jimmy during the holidays as a child was always special. He would explain and show me parts of his collection teaching me the history of the game of baseball. The way he meticulously cared and documented his grand collection you knew someday they would be something of great value. Just the amount and sheer volume of the collection was amazing."
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- A portrait of an elderly man with a balding head, wearing a dark suit jacket, a light blue dress shirt, and a blue and white striped tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.
- **From his niece Susan:** "Uncle Jimmy was always friendly and outgoing and was appreciated by people he interacted with, such as the employees at his local bank. He was generous at Christmas time when he gave each nephew a full set of Topps baseball cards which he



frequently collated by hand. He also had a few root beer barrels to give you which were one of his favorite candy. We were blown away when we were told that Wheatland Auction Services coordinated with PSA to label all the autographed cards with "Uncle Jimmy Collection". It's exciting to know that Uncle Jimmy and his collection will always be remembered and memorialized in this way. The cards look incredible in the PSA holders. I decided to sell my personal collection a few years ago and formed a relationship with Chuck and Stacey from Wheatland. As my other siblings sold their collection, they all went back to Wheatland because Chuck and Stacey have a stellar reputation for honesty and a willingness to work hard to get the most value for the cards. It was Chuck and Stacey that recommended we go with PSA because they are the absolute best at grading cards and will help to improve the value of the collection."

- **From his niece Ellen:** "Uncle Jimmy lived a simple life, he never married, lived in the same house with his sister who also never married, they never drove a car, no internet, only cable in the last few years, they reluctantly used a microwave that we gave him years ago. He loved his nieces and nephews, and all of our kids, so much and the smile on his face when we came for our weekly visit was infectious. Years ago, my brother gave him a monogrammed baseball hat that simply stated "Uncle Jimmy", he proudly wore that hat every day and everyone from town would simply greet him as Uncle Jimmy, boy did he love that! I remember last year when a Mickey Mantle card sold for in excess of 2 million dollars, I brought my iPad up on my next visit to show him and he knew all about it as he had read it in the newspapers, I said OK. Let's get in the attic and find that card!! I knew Mickey Mantle was one of his favorite players and he must have that card! He knew immediately he did not have that card. He told me when the card first came out, he could not afford to purchase the card, he usually paid no more than \$1.25 per card and would NEVER, EVER pay for an autograph or wait in line to meet a player. He could not wait until Derek Jeter got nominated into the Hall of Fame, I am so glad he lived to hear that Derek Jeter got nominated, but he was so annoyed that it was not a unanimous vote!!"



- **From his niece Catherine:** “He was a very unique man, very caring and complex yet simple in many ways. He was a pioneer in sustainability and an avid gardener. He was passionate about collecting baseball cards and memorabilia and would share them with family every Christmas. I feel amazed and happy that our uncle went to great lengths to send out cards and wait for them to return with signatures. Sometimes it would take months to get back to home. PSA agreeing to print ‘Uncle Jimmy Collection’ on the PSA labels of the slabbed autographed items makes me so happy and proud for Uncle Jimmy. Over time we came to realize that he had a sizable collection of great magnitude, he always said ‘you'll figure it out when I'm gone’.”

