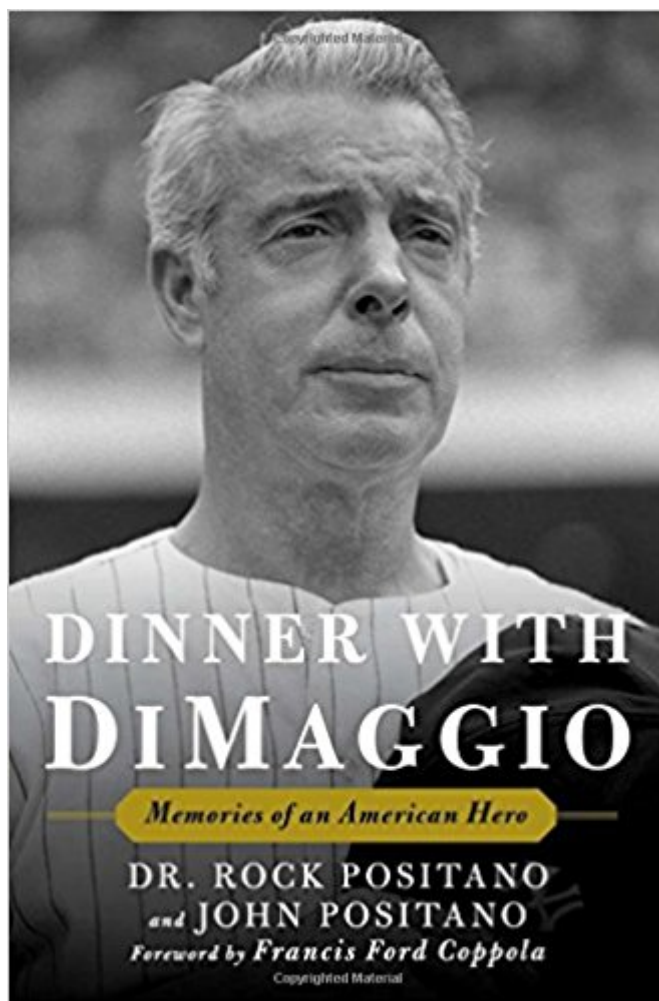


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Dinner With DiMaggio: Memories Of An American Hero



Synopsis

The real Joe DiMaggio, remembered by one of the few who really knew the man behind the legend—candid and little-known stories about baseball icons from Ted Williams, Lou Gehrig, and his Yankees teammates on the field to Marilyn Monroe, Frank Sinatra, and others off the field. As told by Dr. Rock Positano, DiMaggio's closest confidante in New York during the final years of his life, *Dinner with DiMaggio* is an intimate portrait of one of America's most enduring heroes. This memoir of a decade-long friendship reveals the very private DiMaggio as he really was—sometimes demanding, sometimes big-hearted, always impeccable, loyal, and a true stand-up guy—while serving up illuminating stories and rare insights about the people in his life, including his teammates, Muhammad Ali, Sandy Koufax, Woody Allen, and more. In 1990, Dr. Rock Positano, the thirty-two-year-old foot and ankle specialist, was introduced to DiMaggio, the pair brought together by a career-ending heel spur injury. Though Dr. Positano was forty years younger, an unlikely friendship developed after the doctor successfully treated the baseball champ's heel. At the start, Joe mentored Rock but came to rely on his young friend to show him a good time in New York, the town that made him a legend. In time, the famously reserved DiMaggio opened up to Dr. Positano and talked about his joys, his disappointments, and his sorrows as he reflected on his extraordinary life. The stories and experiences shared with Dr. Positano comprise an intimate portrait of one of the great stars of baseball and icon of the twentieth century.

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An American Hero. S. & S. May 2017. 320p. ISBN 9781501156847. \$26; ebk. ISBN 9781501156861.

MEMOIR/SPORTS Here's a fresh, new view of baseball great Joe DiMaggio, who was introduced to internationally renowned foot specialist Dr. Rock Positano following a career-sabotaging heel spur injury and subsequent botched surgeries. Positano shows us a lion in the winter of his last ten years. Publisher's Weekly Dinner with DiMaggio: Memories of An American Hero Rock and John Positano. Simon & Schuster, \$26 (320p) ISBN 978-1-5011-5684-0

Unassuming Manhattan podiatrist Rock Positano considers his close friendship with baseball icon Joe DiMaggio (1914-1999), which lasted through the Yankee's last decade. Positano notes that the relationship started with his treatment of DiMaggio's damaged right heel, an injury that benched him for 65 games in 1949 and forced his retirement two years later. He falls short of hero worship as he sums up the tale of "the Yankee Clipper," the son of a San Francisco fisherman, who became one of the greatest players in baseball. There's never any doubt about the doctor's admiration for DiMaggio as a man of honor, who spoke frankly to his pal about people such as Lou Gehrig, Joe Louis, Mickey Mantle, Frank Sinatra, and the Kennedys, Hollywood, as well as topics such as women and faith. The narrative provides wonderful glimpses of DiMaggio's integrity, kindness, and sensitivity, portraying him as a complicated man who jealously guarded his image. (May) "Pries open Joltin' Joe's perpetually buttoned-up privacy. . . . A rare, intimate portrait of a man so audacious that he left Marilyn Monroe." (Sam Roberts The New York Times) "His baseball accomplishments, impressive and historic as they are, do not alone explain why DiMaggio's name still resonates as it does. His importance is connected to a particular place and time in the history of the game, and the country. Hemingway referenced DiMaggio. So did Paul Simon. A line from the early 40's song 'Joltin' Joe DiMaggio' by the Les Brown Orchestra goes like this: 'He lives in baseball's Hall of Fame, he got there blow-by-blow, our kids will tell their kids his name, Joltin' Joe DiMaggio.' Turns out that was true." (Bob Costas) "Readers do not have to be baseball fans to be captivated by this memoir, which explores such universal themes as friendship, celebrity, aging, and mortality." (Library Journal (starred review)) "An unpretentious but nonetheless lyrical, memoiristic paean to a relationship that was gradually built with mutual effort and escalating warmth. . . . This is a book about conviviality . . . but it is also a book with a searching and often melancholic heart that engages fully with love, loss, estrangement, disappointment, decline and the nature of success and legacy. . . . There is much to cherish in this book." (Adam Hanft Medium) "So many special things about Joe DiMaggio are revealed by this book: his love of children, his contempt of pretense,

and his iconic place in American history, all brought forth here by his closest friend in New York, Dr. Rock Positano. Joe was quiet, not silent, about the pivotal events of the twentieth century, and he shared them with Dr. Positano: Marilyn, the Kennedys, Frank Sinatra, and so many fascinating anecdotes add flesh to the bare bones of this iconic American. This is an important book because Joe is the hero we need in these times: Joe, as Dr. Positano shows, did not compromise his principles for political correctness, hurt feelings or the favor of the crowd. He was a true American original.

— Arianna Huffington — “Positano renders a wholly human portrait of an American icon navigating his way through an adoring yet relentlessly demanding public.”

(Booklist (starred review)) “Joe Di Maggio brought a unique excitement to New York City, his adopted home town, which extended beyond baseball. Joe’s great friend Dr. Rock Positano conveys the excitement of DiMaggio’s reign beautifully in this book. It is a thrill to read from cover to cover.” (David N. Dinkins, 106th Mayor, City of New York)

— “I almost felt I was at the dinner table with Rock and DiMaggio at their New York haunts. . . . Dinner With DiMaggio is a great depiction of a man and legend. A must read!”

(Congressman Peter King)

— “Joe DiMaggio and Rock Positano were fortunate to have found each other. A genuine hero in need of a genuine healer. Each an expert in his field. Rock’s professional skills matched by his kindness and generosity of spirit. There will never be another Joe. But we are all fortunate to have the equally singular Rock still exercising his skills as both doctor and friend.”

(Frank Langella)

— “Dr. Rock Positano is not only a phenomenally gifted doctor but he is a hugely empathetic companion who understands and treats the whole person, not just the injury. Joe DiMaggio found in the good doctor an Italian-American brother and a confidant. The result is this strikingly intimate portrait of a man who has often seemed as private and remote as he is heroic. Paul Simon famously asked, ‘Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?’ We have the answer now: You can find him right here.”

(Anthony DeCurtis, Contributing Editor, Rolling Stone)

“This book summarizes so many of the vibrant principles I espouse . . . the importance of being you . . . the critical need of sharing your ‘authentic self’; undiluted by worry or criticism. I am pleased that this very genuine American hero was also a strong believer in being himself . . . Joe DiMaggio . . . without fail . . . and with no worries. . . .” (Tony Robbins, author of UNSHAKEABLE)

— “Joe DiMaggio loved and trusted Rock for all the reason so many of us do: He is a friend who never shies away from your battles, but joins them, instead. All of us face adversity in life. Having Dr. Positano as a friend is like having a thousand friends. DiMaggio recognized his ability to make people feel secure and safe from the challenges and stress of everyday life. Those of us, like Joe DiMaggio, who

have Rock by our sides walk a little steadier, in more ways than one. – (Keith Ablow, M.D., Fox News Network) – “Baseball fans will savor DiMaggio’s views about Ted Williams, Pete Rose, and many other famous players. – (Kirkus Reviews) – “The narrative provides wonderful glimpses of DiMaggio’s integrity, kindness, and sensitivity, portraying him as a complicated man who jealously guarded his image. – (Publishers Weekly)

Dr. Rock G. Positano is the Director of the Non-Surgical Foot and Ankle Service at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City, where he has been on staff since 1991. He graduated from Yale University School of Medicine, where his thesis on foot health was approved, with Honors and Distinction. He is a clinical assistant professor at Weill Cornell Medical College. He is internationally known for his non-surgical approach for the treatment of foot disorders. Visit him at HSS.edu/Physicians_Positano-Rock.asp. John A. Positano, Esq. is associate producer of The Joe Piscopo Show, which airs daily on AM970, and the weekly Live From Downtown New York City. He graduated from New York Law School. In addition to arguing federal cases, he has written articles on the military, law, and surfing for the LI Pulse, Huffington Post and Daily News (New York). He lives near Stony Brook, New York.

While many know of Joe DiMaggio’s record in baseball, this book by Rock Positano, reveals another side of this baseball icon. Rock fully captures what it was like to be accepted as Joe’s friend after he successfully treated Joe. Living in New York, I am familiar with many of the restaurants referred to in this book, and I fully understand and appreciate the centrality of the dinner table as a place where friends gather to discuss important issues of the day. A most appropriate title for this riveting book. The book is filled with nuggets that remind those of us, who are of this era, what is really important in life. Congratulations to Dr. Positano for providing insight into this American Icon. The book is a very quick read due to Rock’s amazing ability to transport the reader into his story. I highly recommend this book without reservation!

Growing up in New York Mr. DiMaggio was the gold standard. He made baseball look so easy whether at the plate or in centerfield. Mr. DiMaggio was someone who commanded any room he entered whether it was a clubhouse or a nightclub which was packed with A type celebrities I.e. Cary Grant. In today’s baseball no one comes close to Mr. DiMaggio’s star power. Can you imagine how much he would be paid in today’s game. If your a Joe DiMaggio fan you should purchase this book.

Great book with terrific insight

I eagerly anticipated this book before I went on vacation and it did not disappoint. The perfect follow up to Richard Ben Cramer's 2000 bio on Joe DiMaggio. That painted a harsh portrait of Joe. Dr. Positano's narrative serves up Joe's finer points of devotion to family, religion, doing many kindnesses for friends, being a stand up guy, and patience with coping with his enormous fame. Everyone loved him. Yes, he had some eccentricities and could challenge Dr. Positano's patience--but don't we all have quirks too? I particularly liked going down memory lane with the list of Mr. DiMaggio's restaurants in the 1990's many of whom I frequented as a media salesman. I did disagree with Mr. DiMaggio's favorite--Bravo Gianni. Dr. Positano and Mr. DiMaggio were treated well by Mr. Garavelli because of their celebrity. Regular folks were not treated well by him. Unfortunately I had to endure many visits due to a friend who was star struck. It did have great pasta however, and his patented "silk handkerchief". This book deserved 5 stars because it is so well written and engrossing. I couldn't put it down and neither will you!

Richard Ben Cramer wrote an unauthorized biography on Joe DiMaggio but this latest effort by Joe's friend Dr. Rock Positano and John Positano dwarfs anything previously written about the Yankee Clipper. DiMaggio first met the doctor and author when he had problems with his heel on his foot when Joe was still playing for the Yankees. They have been close friends since and Dr. Positano shares his many experiences the two of them shared over the next several decades. DiMaggio was a very private individual and his fastidious nature regarding protecting his image could prove to be a very trying experience for even the most patient individual. Joe DiMaggio's life and his experiences with fellow Yankee' teammates, Frank Sinatra, Ted Williams, wives Dorothy Arnold and Marilyn Monroe, his son Joe Jr. and many others are all revealed here. Joe was a man of many facets "all turned on." He could be kind to kids, abrupt to those he considered interlopers, and send those he felt had wronged him to the "cold Siberian tundra." The author was always accommodating and took Joe wherever he wanted to go. When going out to dinner you'd better have a suit and tie with the knot tied just right. To do otherwise would be a sign of disrespect to those accompanying him. It had to be very difficult to be someone who was recognizable to everyone wherever he went with privacy being at a premium and the author, Dr. Positano, did his best to accommodate Joe's wishes. Joe became reflective and nostalgic as the two of them rode around New York City for the final time as Joe felt perhaps he had a greater effect on strangers than

his own family members. I feel Dr. Positano provided the reader with a fair portrait on the image of Joe DiMaggio. I don't believe Joe would consign his friend to the "cold Siberian tundra" for writing this book. The book contains eight pages of photos and is one of the best baseball books I have read in some time.

I grew up in the same neighborhood as the author and played Little League at the same church, St. Athanasius on Bay Parkway, where I also attended Sunday school, Wednesday school and did my first communion and confirmation. He captured the neighborhood beautifully and rose to be a New York City doctor and hang out with DiMaggio. He would be the envy of all my friends growing up. I enjoyed the book and the insights. However, I could not help but feel it betrayed the memory of DiMaggio. These were things he shared with a friend and confidant. Someone who he trusted and looked after him. Why share them? I do not understand the true motivation behind the book. It did not always paint a flattering picture of DiMaggio or the author. Who knows.

Very insightful . DiMaggio was an iconic and complex character. This book probably gives the best portrait of what it was like to spend time with Joe D. that we will ever have. It is also a study of what it was like to be super famous. An easy compelling read. Some interesting information on his dislike for Sinatra, the Kennedys, etc. DiMaggio has found his Boswell.

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