



Ned Skeldon stadium is home to the Mud Hens (the Tigers' Triple-A minor league affiliate), and ice-cold, bottled beer.

DAN DEAN/staff photographer

# Toledo: it's no longer a laughing matter

## Jamie Farr is king

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

Toledo is the back yard of America. Everyone cuts through it on his way to somewhere else.

Until recently, few people have stopped to take a serious look through the Glass City. Oh, Toledo has all the usual Midwest city things: an industrial economy (with glass being the big ticket production), shopping malls, places to eat, etc.

But to truly understand Toledo is to understand the aura surrounding the city's most divine leader: Jamie Farr.

Like Lenin in the Soviet Union and Mickey Mouse at Disneyland, the likeness of that zany fellow with the hawk nose is everywhere. Yes, what can you say about a city whose favorite son is a guy who made a name for himself dressing up in women's clothing trying to get a Section 8 military discharge as Cpl. Max Klinger on the television show "M\*A\*S\*H."

Try as you might, you cannot get far without seeing Farr.

Drive down the street, his mug is on a billboard. Go into a shop at Portside, his autographed picture is on the wall. Open a Toledo Mud Hen program, and there he is with a baseball jersey on. There's even a women's golf tournament named after him.

AT TONY Packo's Cafe, another enclave of Toledo, there's sort of a Jamie Farr hall of fame. Included on the hallowed walls are a couple of women's hats from his Klinger days on "M\*A\*S\*H," one of his cigar butts, an autographed tongue depressor, an honorary degree from the University of Toledo and a slew of autographed pictures.

The elderly man on his way out who cuts into the serving line at Tony Packo's, though, couldn't give a hoot about Jamie Farr.

"Where's the Dukakis bun?" he asks, almost demanding.

"It's not up yet, sir," the waitress replies. "Ah geez. We brought all these people here to see it," he said, turning around for the door.

Anyone who's anyone has an autographed hot dog bun on Packo's wall (at last count, Jamie Farr had about four). Presidential hopeful Michael Dukakis recently visited Toledo and had one of Packo's famous hot dogs.

He's in good company. Bob Hope, Jimmy

Carter, Arthur Fiedler, Elke Sommer and Burt Reynolds all have their buns on the wall at Packo's. It ranks right up there with getting a key to the city.

"WE USED to have them autograph a real hot dog bun," said Tony Packo Jr., part owner of the Toledo institution. "But they (the buns, that is) would get dry and shrivel up."

Packo solved that. Colebs now sign Styrofoam buns, which like the hot dogs, stand the test of time.

The hot dog is half a Hungarian sausage swathed with mustard, onions and Packo's special sauce. The hot dog was the brain child of Tony Packo's father, Tony Packo Sr. Since most people couldn't afford a sausage sandwich during the depression, the senior Packo figured a half-sausage in hot dog form would be the ticket.

He was obviously right. Packo's is famous nationwide, especially with Klinger constantly raving about the hot dogs on "M\*A\*S\*H." The junior Packo has begun marketing T-shirts and sweatshirts along with foodstuffs like pickles, hot dog sauce and mustard relish.

THE AIR around Ned Skeldon Stadium is sort of dead on this day. That stems from the paucity crowd of 200 souls scattered around the ball park taking in the Mud Hens.

But not to worry assures Jim Rohr, assistant general manager of the Detroit Tigers' farm team. Attendance picks up during the summer when school lets out, and the weather is warmer.

"We really pack them in for the chicken," said Rohr, sounding like Colonel Sanders.

The famous San Diego Chicken is a feathered fellow, who tours ball parks around the country. His comedy schtick includes running around the field between innings toying with fans and kicking dirt on players and umpires.

THE ONLY thing getting kicked this day is the behind of the Mud Hens. The Hens are trailing the Columbus Clippers, the New York Yankees triple-A farm club, by four runs.

Who cares. This is the baseball Abner Doubleday had in mind more than a 100 years ago. One can hear the crack of the bat, the ball hitting fielder's gloves and players swearing when they strike out.

On top of that, they serve real beer right from glass bottles (After all, it is the Glass City).



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Hot dog maker to the stars — Tony Packo's restaurant.

Then there is the price of a ticket. Four bucks lets you sit 440 feet away — in the centerfield bleachers — at Tiger Stadium. Four bucks at a Mud Hen game puts you in the front row, or close to it.

The brand of baseball isn't bad either. Toledo is the last stop a player makes en route to the big leagues. In the eyes of Ray Palacios, Doug Strange and Scott Lusader, Toledo is one step from Tiger Stadium. In the eyes of Eric Kling, of course, Toledo is Sparky Anderson's dog house.

## Glass acts

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

Baseball and hot dogs aren't the only Toledo attractions.

The city has a bevy of first-rate restaurants and shopping centers, including Portside on the Maumee River. The Toledo Zoo — featuring a pair of visiting pandas this summer — is one of the nation's finest. As is the Toledo Museum of Art.

Some suggestions on traveling to the Glass City. For one, avoid I-75 if possible. Construction near Monroe has been known to snarl traffic for miles. An alternative route would be to take I-94 west to US-23 south to I-475 east, which leads to downtown Toledo.

The route adds a few miles. But the added minute or two is a lot better than having to endure a heavy-duty traffic jam on I-75.

Here's a brief guide to some of the Glass City's hotspots:

• Portside resembles downtown Detroit's Trapper's Alley in design, but on a smaller scale. Like Trapper's Alley, there are plenty of specialty shops and places to eat.

Some of the more unusual shops include a Wolverine/Buckeye shop, selling both University of Michigan and Ohio State University souvenirs. Not a bad idea considering Toledo is sort of the DMZ of the Wolverine-Buckeye rivalry.

The M.A.S.H. (Mud Hen All Sport House) sells a whole line of Mud Hen souvenirs, including used baseball pants and women's underwear that has "I'm Behind the Mud Hens" printed on the back.

Want something to eat? Try the seafood stand on the top level. They serve a mean clam chowder in a Bud Light beer cup for \$1.75. A beer-wine shop sells imported beer by the single bottle. (Portside is at 408 N. Summit. For more information, call 419-244-7000.)

• El Greco, Rubens, Rembrandt, Gainsborough, Van Gogh, Degas, Monet, Matisse and Picasso have their works displayed at the Toledo Museum of Art.

The museum has special exhibitions, concerts, films, lectures along with programs for adults and children. There's a cafe and bookstore. Admission is free (except for special exhibits). The Toledo Museum of Art is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and from 1-5 p.m. on Sunday.

(The Toledo Museum of Art is at Monroe Street and Scottwood Avenue, exit Collingwood on I-75. For more information, call (419) 255-8000.)

# 'Pandamonium' reigns at Toledo Zoo exhibit

By Iris Sanderson Jones  
contributing travel editor

Mother Nature really stacked the deck against the giant pandas, but you would never know it by watching their adoring fans at the Toledo Zoo this summer.

We usually give this kind of attention only to movie stars and sports heroes, not to black-and-white bears — or are they raccoons? — rolling around in the fork of a fallen tree in their outdoor setting or ignoring us completely as they sleep the afternoon away in air-conditioned comfort behind glass.

Le Le and Nan Nan were loaned to the Toledo Zoo for 100 days by the People's Republic of China, creating more excitement than anybody has seen in the "Glass City" since John Denver spent a week there one day in the 1970s.

IF YOU BROWSE through the

Chinese museum exhibit "The Panda and the Dragon" or read the information highlighted in the panda pavilion, you will wonder how pandas ever survive at all.

It is difficult even for scientists to tell the males from the females. When America's first live panda, Su-Lin, died at Chicago's Brookfield Zoo in 1935, they discovered belatedly that the two-year-old female was really a male!

Females like Nan Nan are only fertile for a few days each spring. They are slow to reach sexual maturity, very selective about their mates, have only one tiny four-cousin cub that must be carried around and nurtured for a long time; few survive.

Those that survive spend 10 to 12 hours a day eating bamboo in a world where the bamboo supply is dwindling. No wonder the giant panda is nearly extinct, with only an es-

timated 1,000 left in the "wild." And that's not so wild, since the Chinese have now built reserves for them in the mountains of central China where the only giant pandas in the world still live.

When the People's Republic loans pandas to foreign zoos, they send those animals that probably won't mate anyway. I saw Bai and Yuan Yuan in San Diego last January, two great cuddly critters who sat behind a glass wall and ate bamboo while all of us adored them.

ZOO VISITORS have the same mesmerized look on their faces as Le Le and Nan Nan wrestle and play in their much more accessible setting in Toledo. If you are lucky, or you call the panda hotline for advance information, you will see the two pandas outside together in their exhibit setting, which is separated from the spectators only by a small



most. ENTRANCE to the Toledo Zoo is \$2.50 for adults and \$1 for children ages 2-11; if you are a member of

another zoo, like the Detroit Zoo, that usually lowers the cost when you visit it out-of-town zoo, so take your membership card with you.

Once inside, you must pay an additional \$2 for adults and \$1 for children to see the Pandas. Le Le and Nan Nan have both an indoor and outdoor exhibit area. Where they are depends on the weather, among other things.

Try to catch them outdoors by calling ahead to the panda Hotline: (419) PANDAS2 (that's 726-3212).

So far, the lines have not been long. That could change now that the kids are out of school for the summer, so pick your timing.

ZOO HOURS are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pandas are most active morning and evenings. They tend to slumber midday, although they were active enough when I was there on a warm mid-afternoon.

For more information about Toledo contact the Greater Toledo Office of Tourism and Conventions, 218 Huron St., Toledo, Ohio, 43604 or telephone (419) 243-5191.