

Shooting the Mule

A story about two baseball legends provides a humorous, but important, lesson. In his autobiography, *Number 1*, Billy Martin told about hunting in Texas with Mickey Mantle. Mantle had a friend who would let them hunt on his ranch. When they reached the ranch, Mantle told Martin to wait in the car while he checked in with his friend.

Mantle's friend quickly gave them permission to hunt, but he asked Mantle for a favor. He had a pet mule in the barn that was going blind, and he didn't have the heart to put him out of his misery. He asked Mantle to shoot the mule for him.

When Mantle came back to the car, he pretended to be angry. He scowled and slammed the door. Martin asked him what was wrong, and Mantle said his friend wouldn't let them hunt. "I'm so mad at that guy," Mantle said, "I'm going out to his barn and shoot one of his mules!"

Martin protested, "We can't do that!" But Mantle was adamant. "Just watch me."

Mantle jumped out of the car with his rifle, ran inside the barn and shot the mule. As he was leaving the barn, though, he heard two shots. He saw that Martin had taken out his rifle, too.

"What are you doing, Martin?" he yelled.

Martin yelled back, face red with anger. "We'll show that son of a gun! I just killed two of his cows!"

Anger can be dangerously contagious. As the Book of Proverbs puts it, "Make no friendship with an angry man ... lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul" (Proverbs 22:24-25).

--Beecher Hunter