

Hank Aaron

Baseball Hall of Famer and Humanitarian

When Hank Aaron played his first major league baseball game in 1954, he struck out twice, grounded out, hit into a double play and fouled out. There was very little indication that, exactly 20 years later, the promising minor league MVP would hit his 715th home run in Atlanta Stadium to break Babe Ruth's seemingly untouchable record.

And, he wouldn't stop there. In fact, in Aaron's 23-year major league career, he rewrote baseball's hitting record book. He hit 755 home runs, a career record that stood for 33 years, and he currently holds more major league batting records than any other player in the game's history.

Aaron had a 20-year string of 20 or more home runs. He hit .300 or better in 14 seasons, won the National League home run crown three times and tied for a fourth, led the league in RBIs four times and won three Gold Gloves.

In 1970, he became the first player to compile both 3,000 career hits and more than 500 homers. He joined the 30-30 club (30 HRs and 30 SBs in the same season) in 1963. He played in the major league All-Star Game 24 times. He was honored as the National League's Most Valuable Player in 1957 and named Player of the Year by *Sporting News* in 1956 and 1963. He played 21 seasons with the Braves before being traded to Milwaukee in 1974. He retired as a player two years later.

One of the greatest home run hitters of all time, Aaron was elected to Baseball's Hall of Fame in 1982. He missed by nine votes being the first unanimous choice ever in the voting by the Baseball Writers' Association of America. In February 2003, Aaron received the first Jackie Robinson Lifetime Achievement Legacy Award from the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, honoring his "career excellence in the face of adversity."

At his 65th birthday celebration on February 5, 1999, Aaron was honored for his lifetime achievements both as a player and as a humanitarian. Political and athletic luminaries—among them President Bill Clinton, Commissioner of Baseball Bud Selig and Sammy Sosa—witnessed the 1999 World Series unveiling of the Hank Aaron Award, which is presented annually to the best hitters in the National and American leagues.

Since his retirement from professional baseball in 1976, Aaron has gone to bat for the nation's youth. He established the Chasing the Dream Foundation to provide grants to children between the ages of nine and 12 to enable them to pursue advanced study in music, art, writing, dance and sports. He serves on the Board of Governors for Boys and Girls Clubs of America and is a board member of Atlanta Technical College, as well as the Atlanta Falcons, Retail Ventures, Inc., and Medallion Financial Corporation.

Also in 1976, Aaron joined the Braves' front office where he served as vice president and director of Player Development for 13 years. He oversaw the development of many players instrumental in the Braves' 1982 National League West Division Championship, including Dale Murphy, who won back-to-back NL MVP awards in 1982-83. In December 1989, he began serving as senior vice president of the Braves.

Aaron and his wife, Billye, who is a member of the Morehouse College Board of Trustees, live in Atlanta.