

National Baseball Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony

Sunday, July 24, 2022

Cooperstown, New York

JANE FORBES CLARK: Good afternoon and welcome to the 2022 National Baseball Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony. We are so happy that you are with us today in Cooperstown. As we begin our 73rd Induction Ceremony in front of a live national television audience on the MLB Network, I would like to welcome to the stage the Hall of Fame president, Josh Rawitch.

[APPLAUSE]

[INTRODUCTIONS]

And now to the Class of 2022:

Bud Fowler was the first African American player to integrate professional teams. Here to speak for Bud Fowler is a 12-time All-Star and a man who has long supported the legacies of early Black ball players let's welcome from the class of 2001, Dave Winfield.

[APPLAUSE]

A stalwart at first base for the Brooklyn Dodgers of the 1950s, he is represented by his daughter Irene Hodges, let's welcome her to the stage and let's hear it for Hall of Famer Gil Hodges.

[APPLAUSE]

Raised in Cuba, he would become the first Black ball player for the Chicago White Sox after he joined the American League after winning a Negro League World Series title. Please welcome to the stage his widow, Sharon Miñoso, and let's hear it for Hall of Famer Minnie Miñoso.

[APPLAUSE]

A player and manager for the Kansas City Monarchs and the first African American coach in American League or National League history, his work was integral to the creation of the Negro League's Baseball Museum in Kansas City, let's welcome to the stage his niece, Dr. Angela Terry, and let's hear it for an all-time great, Hall of Famer Buck O'Neil.

[APPLAUSE]

He also came out of Cuba and was a three-time batting champion. Let's welcome to the stage class of 2022 Hall of Famer Tony Oliva.

[APPLAUSE]

He's one of only five pitchers in the majors to play 25 seasons. When he retired with 283 wins, it was the eighth most among pitchers in the live ball era. Please welcome Hall of Famer Jim Kaat.

[APPLAUSE]

And finally, one of the best clutch hitters in the history of baseball, 541 career home runs, the driving force for three World Series championships for the Boston Red Sox, please welcome Hall of Famer Big Papi, David Ortiz.

[APPLAUSE]

Let's welcome to the stage another special individual who will be part of today's ceremony, the tenth commissioner in the history of Major League Baseball, let's welcome him, the commissioner, Rob Manfred.

[APPLAUSE]

JANE FORBES CLARK: I would now like to ask you all to please rise and remove cover as we welcome a very special guest to the stage to perform our National Anthem. She joins us today not only to sing the National Anthem, but to celebrate her father's Hall of Fame induction. A music producer, vocalist currently studying at Berklee College of Music in Boston, please welcome the daughter of the Class of 2022 Hall of Fame inductee David Ortiz, Alex Veda Ortiz. Alex.

[APPLAUSE]

[NATIONAL ANTHEM]

And it's now time to induct the first of our seven new members of the Baseball Hall of Fame. As chairman of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, it is my honor to welcome Jim Kaat into the Hall of Fame family and to ask him to join me as Commissioner Manfred reads the inscription on his Hall of Fame plaque.

COMMISSIONER MANFRED: James Lee Kaat, Jim, Kitty. Washington, A.L., 1959-1960. Minnesota, A.L., 1961 to '73. Chicago, A.L., 1973-75. Philadelphia, N.L., 1976-79. New York, A.L., 1979-'80. St. Louis, N.L., 1980-83.

Unwavering workhorse left-hander. Won 283 games and pitched 4,530 and 1/3 innings across 25 big league seasons, topping 200 innings marked 14 times. Anchored Twins rotation for 13 years, helping Minnesota to the 1965 pennant.

Three-time All-Star, had three 20-win campaigns, including back-to-back seasons with White Sox in 1974-75, when he mastered quick-pitch delivery. Transition to bullpen in final seasons, aiding in Cardinals' 1982 World Series victory. Set standards for fielding excellence among pitchers, earning 16 straight Gold Glove awards.

[APPLAUSE]

Retired with the most seasons of any pitcher in history, 25, and sixth most games started, 625.

[APPLAUSE]

JIM KAAT: Thank you. Thank you so much. I wish to begin by thanking Jane Forbes Clark, chairman of the National Baseball Hall of Fame; Josh Rawitch, the president; the entire staff of the Hall of Fame; and also the hundreds of volunteers that have made this weekend go so smoothly.

[APPLAUSE]

And I want to thank all of you for being here. What a wonderful atmosphere to demonstrate your love for the game of baseball. And I found out yesterday, these people are people that love baseball.

I fell in love with baseball on June 26, 1946. My dad drove me to Detroit to see a doubleheader, Red Sox-Tigers. I saw Ted Williams, Bobby Doerr, Hank Greenberg, Hal Newhouser.

But what really impressed me is when I walked up the ramp to find our seats, this dark green cathedral called Briggs Stadium opened up. And the greenest expanse of grass I had ever seen, the whitest white uniforms. And I think my little seven-year-old brain said, "I want to be one of those guys."

And I actually think that from that day forward all I wanted to be was a baseball player. I learned a lot about the Hall of Fame actually in those years. My dad, my parents actually drove here in 1947 to see the induction of my dad's favorite player, Lefty Grove.

In our living room, we played a lot of baseball history, he asked me a lot of questions. I knew the answers to one of the questions before he got done reciting it. And the answers were Ty Cobb, Walter Johnson, Christy Mathewson, Babe Ruth and Honus Wagner, the first five inductees in the Hall of Fame in 1956. I knew that before I was 10 years old.

Now, when you hear the words after you answer your phone, "This is Jane Clark calling from the Hall of Fame" -- your life immediately changes. And Jane, those words will resonate with me for the rest of my life.

The day after that, I happened to hear --

[APPLAUSE]

The day after that, I happened to hear Ray Charles belt out "America the Beautiful." And he came to that line, "God Shed His Grace on Thee." It reminded me, God has shed his grace on me extravagantly. I mean, we have a world with millions of people who are disadvantaged, oppressed, wake up daily to pain and suffering.

I was able to live, and still am, a comfortable life for over 83 years. I had great parents. Grew up in a great community, Zeeland, Michigan. And I was gifted with the ability to play baseball. And I'm grateful for that.

I want to acknowledge a few people today. A couple that aren't here. I had 22 wonderful years with MaryAnn Montanaro, she was always hoping this day would come. My daughter Jill was taken from us last year. This would certainly be a special day for her.

But I see the smiles on their faces as they would celebrate the joy that we have this weekend. Now, Margie Mather Kaat is here. And I often introduce myself as Mr. Margie Kaat, because she is by far the strongest part of our partnership. And she has brought me joy, purpose, inspiration and support for over 13 years. And I thank you for being who you are. You are an awesome partner.

[APPLAUSE]

I want to thank the Golden Days committee. When your career is validated by players that you played against, played with, media people, club executives that actually saw you play, that's the highest honor you can get.

And I'm honored to go in with the Class of 2022 and my fellow inductees.

Now, you know my dad was a baseball fan. So I want to tell you the impact he had on my life. It was a blend of wisdom, discipline and support.

I never understood the discipline as a young boy. He never had more than an eighth-grade education. Somehow he had a master's degree in discipline. And he knew how to administer it.

And I didn't see the value of that until I got into adulthood. I don't know that I'm there for sure yet, but I'm getting there.

But his wisdom came into play in 1957. Dick Winsick, a scout for the Washington Senators, had been watching me pitch for Hope College, a small college in Holland, Michigan. He actually came there to see the Kalamazoo pitcher. And we won that game. He said I've got to go back see that kid. We won that next game and subsequently offered me a \$4,000 contract to sign and go to Superior, Nebraska to start my career. In the meantime, Pete Milito, the White Sox scout, called and said we think we can get your son \$25,000.

Well, what was required of that, and my dad, an avid reader of the Sporting News, knew that, that if you signed a bigger contract from \$4,000, you had to sit on the big league bench on the roster for two years.

And he followed the plight of those players. He said, thank you, Pete. Jim's going to go to the minor leagues and learn how to play the game.

My dad made \$72 a week in 1957. You can do the math. Figure out what he sacrificed so his son could start his career at the right level.

I did go down to the minor leagues and started my career down there. And I actually made my debut a little after two years from the time I signed. But I wouldn't have advanced that far had I not spent a couple of years in the minor leagues and specifically 1958, Missoula, Montana, Class C League. That's a tough league to pitch in.

When I went in to Boise, I'm 19 years old, the cleanup hitter for the Boise Braves, 23-year-old grizzled veteran, went on to become known as Mr. Baseball, Bob Uecker. Ueck was the cleanup hitter. My manager was a 27-year-old playing manager.

He's 91 and he's here today. Jack McKeon, wherever you are, could you stand for a moment?

[APPLAUSE]

So I started out that season, Jack, 1-4. And I thought one more bad start and my dreams are going to be crushed before they start. I just want to tell you this story, because it shows you the fine line between standing here being inducted into the Hall of Fame and having one more bad start and sending, getting you sent home.

And Jack called me over one day and he said, "Kid, you're going to pitch in the big leagues. You're pitching for me every four days. Might pitch a little in relief between starts." We only have seven starters; we had seven pitchers. We had a 17-man roster.

So come September, 240 innings later, I learned a lot about myself. I learned a lot about pitching. I learned a lot about being a supportive teammate. And Jack, it still brings a smile to my face when I think about the situations I would get into, bases loaded, eighth inning, nobody out, close game. You didn't run out to the mound to fill me full of information and advice. You stepped out in front of home plate, tossed me the ball, "Figure out a way to get out of it."

And sometimes I did, sometimes I didn't. But I thank him for letting me take ownership of the situation and take ownership of the game and my position.

I want to thank several organizations here. The Minnesota Twins. A lot of Minnesota fans here.

[APPLAUSE]

I pitched there for 13 seasons. I was there almost the entire decade of the '60s. And baseball was new there and I want to tell you, you fans of the upper greater Midwest, it was such a pleasure as a young player to start my career up there. And I thank you very much for that.

And I was honored to be a part of some terrific teams in the '60s. Two of the guys that helped me win some games are right back here, Rod Carew and Tony Oliva, who will be inducted momentarily.

Another one that sat back there for a while is not here, is Harmon Killebrew. So I'm very thankful for that. And I had two pitching coaches, Eddie Lopat and Johnny Sain, who taught me the art of pitching.

1973, Roland Hemond, Hall of Fame executive, claimed my contract off waivers. I got reunited with Johnny Sain. Chuck Tanner was the most positive baseball person I'd been around, he's our manager. Many times I thought he was going to send me home. He kept flipping me the ball every four days.

In between those three guys, they resurrected my career.

You know, when you pitch for a long time you have a lot of catchers. I had 38 of them. I wish I could thank them all.

Three of them are here, all great baseball minds. Tim McCarver, Phil Roof and back here, Hall of Famer Ted Simmons. And the late Earl Battey caught most of my innings. And with that mellow soft-spoken voice he was a great guidance for me in my early years.

And in 1982, I finished my career, my last full season with the St. Louis Cardinals. That was the most exciting team I've ever been on and most rewarding year, because when Bruce Sutter, who is sitting back here, struck out the last hitter in Game 7, it meant that I would be able to wear this World Series ring. And that's what we play for.

So I want to thank Whitey Herzog, the manager, all the coaches, every player on that team, for enabling me to wear this ring.

I am humbled and honored to be included in this fraternity of some of the greatest players to play the game. And I thank you for being part of this wonderful day.

[APPLAUSE]

JANE FORBES CLARK: Let's welcome our second inductee, Bud Fowler, into the Hall of Fame family and ask Dave Winfield, Hall of Fame Class of 2001, who will be speaking about Bud, to join me as Commissioner Manfred reads Bud's plaque.

COMMISSIONER MANFRED: As the first Black professional baseball player, spent his youth in Cooperstown before embarking on a nomadic career starring most everywhere he played. On-field talent led to stints with numerous otherwise all-white teams but opportunities were often short-lived due to racial prejudice.

In 1895 helped form the Page Fence Giants, one of the earliest teams on the Black barnstorming circuit, spearheaded the creation and promotion of several other successful clubs while moving from pitcher to second base and at various times managing.

DAVE WINFIELD: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Glad to see everyone back here in Cooperstown to celebrate the Hall of Fame Class of 2022.

Today it's my privilege and honor to speak on behalf of today's inductees, a gentleman that was born and raised in this area of the state of New York, a man born nearly two lifetimes ago, who was introduced to this great game of baseball in its nascent stages in the mid 1800s.

This African American is from the Empire State. His name is John W. Jackson, AKA Bud Fowler. I'm pleased to be able to speak on his behalf today.

For those who haven't heard about Mr. Bud Fowler, please allow me to tell you who he was, what he accomplished in our great game and about his legend and legacy. With that I'd like to take you on a brief American history tour.

Bud Fowler was born on March 16, in Fort Plain, New York in 1858, only 25 miles away from where we are today.

Shortly after his birth, his family moved to Cooperstown, right here. The village historian recorded 28 African Americans living in Cooperstown at the time. In 1878, John made his professional debut in the International Association.

His playing name became Bud because that's how he referred to others -- "hey, Bud." So he adopted the last name of Fowler as well.

Now, making his pro debut, he became the first Black player to integrate a white professional team nearly 70 years before the great Jackie Robinson.

Now, it seems simple enough, but knowing the times, it was vastly more complicated for him than just signing up to play, no matter what his talents were.

There was something magical about the game, though, that caught his eye and his imagination, that he'd spend the rest of his life playing, managing and imagining what this game of baseball could be. He had a passion and pursuit for the game and it became the biggest love of his life.

Bud's first pro team was located in Lynn, Massachusetts. But with various rules and prohibitions he was often called to pitch as a substitute on other teams.

It's hard to imagine the challenges he faced. Racism ran rampant even though baseball's color line had not been officially established at that time.

This caused him to have frequent affiliations with other teams. For example, while he was playing in (indiscernible) Ontario, Canada, he was quoted as saying, Some of the Maple Leaves are ill-natured enough to object to a colored pitcher. In Binghamton, New York, the players refused to take the field until Fowler, the colored second baseman, was removed.

Despite the passion for the game, the color of his skin forced him into a nomadic career seeking teams to play for. Sometimes because of his own white teammates that -- or just as much as the opposing teams. He pitched, caught, played second base.

He did it for the Keokuk Hawkeyes in Iowa. He played in the Colorado League, played in Kansas for the Topeka Capitals, went to Indiana to play for the Terre Haute Hoosiers, went southwest to join the New Mexico League, Greenville and the Michigan State League. And he led the Nebraska State League with 45 stolen bases in just 30 games.

And I learned that he came through my home state of Minnesota and played for Stillwater. They hired him in 1884. Now, they played their first 27 games on the road. They lost the first 16.

But Bud Fowler came up and got them their first win. He took them out of their funk and he was rewarded handsomely. They gave him \$10 and a brand new suit.

He played or managed in well over 50 communities in his career. Fowler himself claimed to have played on teams in 22 different states and in Canada.

Now, that likely eclipses any professional athlete, baseball player that you see up here in the Hall of Fame and perhaps anywhere else.

It seems like that song Johnny Cash wrote that you hear on TV all the time, "I've been everywhere man, I've been everywhere," just for Bud Fowler.

Now, throughout his career, his playing ability received high praise. Terre Haute Evening Gazette wrote, "Fowler, the colored player who twirled the spear for the visitors, pitched a fine game and batted well. The crowd showed their appreciation for his work by applauding him every time he came to bat."

So he must have had skills and good stuff, what we call today. Some fans loved him but many of his own teammates and opposing teammates didn't. They didn't want to play with a Black man.

As baseball's color barrier grew increasingly explicit, his career shifted from a focus on playing to organizing.

He was quoted as saying back in 1895, "My skin is against me. The race prejudice is so strong that my Black skin barred me." That was years before, in 1887, the minor leagues had already stopped hiring Black players.

Now, facing those never-ending and unrelenting barriers, Bud became a strong voice and advocate for an all Black league. With that in mind he helped to start four new Black teams. He teamed up with Grant "Home Run" Johnson to form the Page Fence Giants who were envisioned as the Midwest's answer to the East Coast Cuban American Giants.

They traveled in a custom railcar, and they went on to become one of the all-time great barnstorming teams. The inaugural season the Giants faced off against Major League teams including the Cincinnati Reds. They lost a two-game matchup with them. But it was not all lost on Fowler who hit .316 that year on a club that posted 118 wins and 36 losses.

He also had a hand in creating the Smoky City Giants, the All-American Black Tourists and the Kansas City Stars.

Think about this, some 16 years before the creation of the Negro Leagues, in 1920, Fowler was quoted in the Cincinnati Inquirer, in 1904, as saying, "Some of these days, a few people with nerve enough to take the chance to form a colored league of about eight cities, they're going to pull off a barrel of money. Now, I know the field is there," he said.

Fowler was described in the article as a patriarch among the Black Sons of Swats.

It has been said by others that pioneers many times do not get to enjoy the changes they bring about or the doors they open. But Fowler's impact on the game and spreading baseball to Black communities around the country was indeed profound.

Throughout his career in baseball, Fowler worked as a barber, a trade his father passed on to him and one he practiced often during the offseason, as he was looking for the next team to join.

It really wouldn't surprise me a bit if he was one of the first team barbers in professional baseball, since that became his occupation when he finished playing.

Now, ask any current player up here, who lines 'em up, gives them dreads, knots, cornrows or color, who cleans up their beards. Papi? Who? You know.

Fowler passed away at his sister's house in February 26, 1913. He was laid to rest just 30 miles from where we stand today, in Frankfort, New York, where in 1987, the day before Catfish Hunter, Ray Dandridge and Billy Williams were inducted into the Hall of Fame, a marker was placed on his previously unmarked grave.

That event, held by SABR, the Society For American Baseball Research was attended by Hall of Fame Monte Irvin and one of Fowler's fellow members of the Hall of Fame Class of 2022, the great Buck O'Neil.

To show my respect on the way into Cooperstown this year, I stopped by his gravesite to pay homage.

When it's all said and done, you cannot think of Bud Fowler in statistics alone. Much of his statistical record has been lost to time, but you'll have to understand his entire career as a stellar ball player equal to and better than others of his time who gained recognition and notoriety for his play on the field and beyond.

He played professionally for over two decades, excelling as a pitcher, catcher, second baseman and he managed for at least 10 of those years. He was listed as among the top Black players of the 19th century and never wore a glove on the field, taking everything that came his way barehanded.

By some he was called the dean of Black baseball. So there's an unmistakable line you can follow from Bud Fowler to Andrew "Rube" Foster, who created the Negro Leagues in 1920, to Jackie Robinson in 1947, and through the other inductees we celebrate here today.

So I ask, or I suggest that you remember Bud Fowler in a broad context, not just as a pioneering African American professional baseball player. Remember him as a skilled athlete who endured obstacles that are hard to imagine today as an early force in integrating the game and as visionary who attempted to create a league of their own when the roadblocks of his time were present. Yet he still persisted.

One last thing. I personally hope that all of you will see him as a man that loved the game of baseball from its beginnings -- and as the very first player from this small village of Cooperstown to be inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

[APPLAUSE]

So beginning tonight, please pay homage to his plaque in the Hall of Fame and know that here in Cooperstown, his hometown, that road leads to Doubleday Field. It's now named after him -- Fowler Way. And it was done with much intent.

So John W. Jackson, AKA Bud Fowler, congratulations, sir. You've made baseball history today. But you've always been a part of American history.

So we all tip our hat to you and it has been indeed my pleasure representing you here today and your legacy during this well-deserved recognition ceremony today. Thank you, sir. God bless you and welcome to the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

JANE FORBES CLARK: As we move through this afternoon's program, as chairman of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, it is my honor to welcome our next inductee, Sharon Miñoso, as Minnie's widow, to come and join me as we ask the commissioner to please read Minnie's plaque.

COMMISSIONER MANFRED: (Spanish.)

Saturnino Orestes Armas Arrieta Miñoso. New York, N.L., 1946-48. Cleveland, A.L., 1949-1951, 1958-59. Chicago, A.L., 1951-1957, 1960-61, 1964, 1976, 1980. St. Louis, N.L., 1962. Washington, A.L., 1963.

Electrifying left fielder from Cuba. Blazed path for generations of Latino ball players to follow as the first dark-skinned Latin American to play A.L. or N.L. lifted Negro National League's New York Cubans to 1947 championship before setting American League ablaze with his base running and clutch hitting for the Go-Go White Sox of the 1950s.

Led A.L. in stolen bases three times and triples three times from 1951 through '61 while earning nine All-Star Game selections and three Gold Glove awards.

Returned to White Sox to extend big league career into five different decades. Across 20 Major League seasons, hit 299 with 195 homers, 216 steals and a .387 on-base percentage.

[APPLAUSE]

SHARON MIÑOSO: Good afternoon. As Minnie would say if he was here with us this afternoon, thank you my friends from the bottom of my heart.

While experiencing today is bittersweet without him, I'd like to believe he's here in spirit with us, smiling broadly, his arms held wide, embracing us all.

I'd like to begin by thanking the Hall of Fame -- Jane Forbes Clark, Josh Rawitch, Jon Shestakofsky, Whitney Horn, also the Hall of Fame board of directors and staff, who made us all feel so welcome.

Thank you as well to the members of the Hall of Fame Era Committee who voted for Minnie's induction last December.

I'd also like to congratulate this year's 2022 inductees -- Tony Oliva, Jim Kaat, David Ortiz and also the families of Bud Fowler, Gil Hodges and Buck O'Neil.

[APPLAUSE]

I think all on the stage would agree with Minnie when he would say that baseball has been very, very, very good to me.

(Laughter).

On behalf of Minnie as well as our whole family, we'd like to thank the Chicago White Sox organization. Thank you for your kindness and support, especially Jerry Reinsdorf, Howard Pizer, Scott Reifert and Jo Simmons and also Christine O'Reilly.

I consider Christine Minnie's work wife and appreciated all her help over the years in keeping Minnie organized with his appearances and many requests. It truly took a village to care for my husband.

Thank you to all the players and families who befriended Minnie and our family over the many years.

Minnie considered everyone at the White Sox his extended family, including all the employees who loved my husband and were so excited at his receiving this honor.

Mr. White Sox loved you all.

Thank you to all the friends and many supporters who continued to advocate for him over the many years. Bob Kendrick of the Negro League Hall of Fame, Joe Posnanski, Orlando Cepeda, Adrian Bergo (phonetic) and Eduardo and Tony Perez. The list is simply too long to include everyone, but know we love and appreciate you all.

Thank you to Bill Veeck and his family for signing Minnie to Cleveland's franchise where he became the Major League's first Afro Latino player. During the Go-Go Sox era of the '50s, Minnie fell in love with the city of Chicago, and the White Sox fans returned the love over and over again.

Our family would like to offer a special acknowledgment to Chuck Comiskey and the Comiskey family as well as Minnie's teammates -- Billy Pierce, Nellie Fox, Luis Aparicio, Chico Carrasquel, Moose Skowron, Jim Landis and Jungle Jim Rivera, who were all so kind and helpful towards Minnie when he first arrived in the United States while playing in the Major Leagues.

We also send our love to Ron Kittle who Minnie mentored during Ron's early career and referred to Minnie as Papa Minnie.

Over his 75 years in the game, Minnie enjoyed many relationships with baseball. In addition to the Major Leagues, his career took him to Cuba, the Negro Leagues and the Mexican Leagues decade after decade after decade after decade, after decade, after decade.

[APPLAUSE]

75 years in baseball.

Minnie enjoyed a very special bond with his countrymen, players like Jose Cardenal, our son Charlie's godfather, Luis Tiant and our fellow inductee, Tony Oliva.

[APPLAUSE]

He played the role of surrogate father and mentor to many Cubans, including Jose Contreras, Alexei Ramirez, Orlando Hernandez and Jose Abreu.

[SPANISH]

We love you all.

While Minnie has been inducted into other esteemed halls of fame, including Cuba and the Dominican Republic, it would have meant the world to Minnie to hear this day and be here himself, knowing he was inducted into the Cooperstown Hall of Fame alongside baseball's greatest players.

And what makes today's recognition especially bittersweet is that Minnie faced many obstacles to arrive at this day. As a dark-skinned Afro Latino in the height of segregation, he knew of the racial and cultural challenges that he would endure coming to the United States.

He tolerated them so he could play professional baseball and fulfill his own American dream.

Little did he know as a pioneer that he was opening the door for countless others behind him, some of them who sit proudly on this stage.

As a youngster growing up in Cuba, Minnie learned an important lifelong lesson from his parents. Regardless of the situation, respond to negativity as a gentleman.

When an opposing pitcher came up and intentionally threw a fastball at Minnie's head, the very best reply Minnie had was to have a big smile on his face and hit a line drive to outfield.

[APPLAUSE]

Throughout it all he was never bitter despite the many injustices and hardships he faced. Today's honor bestowed upon Minnie is most appropriate, not only as a Hall of Fame player, but Minnie was always a gentleman, a Hall of Fame person off the field and in the community.

Minnie loved people who they were as individuals and he would say, we should all love and respect each other no matter our color or differences. He was a great ambassador for the game of baseball and the city of Chicago.

Baseball was his life. He was proud to wear his uniform to come to the ballpark every day, to greet fans with a smile and sign autograph after autograph. Some people believe that Minnie signed an autograph for every man, woman and child in the Windy City.

I'd like to acknowledge Minnie's children and grandchildren -- our son, Charlie Rice-Miñoso; Minnie's daughter Marilyn Mecias (phonetic) and spouse Estrubel (phonetic); and grandchildren, Yvette (phonetic) and Estruble Jr.; and his daughter Cecilia and spouse Herb and grandson Lorenzo (phonetic).

[APPLAUSE]

Unable to join us today is Orestes Jr. who passed away this March. Orestes played with his dad in the Mexican League in the winters in the 1970s and sadly he did not get to see his dad's Induction Ceremony today.

Second to the number of autographs Minnie signed is the amount of food he cooked. Holidays and family gatherings with Minnie were filled with delicious Cuban food and messy kitchens, which his daughters and I were left cleaning up.

He would also have hours of domino marathons with his son-in-law and grandsons.

During the wintertime, Minnie and I would have very competitive domino games between the two of us. These were some of my fondest memories and fun times with him.

Playing dominos in front of the fireplace, our dog, Jewels, at our feet under the table, his favorite cowboy movie on and also him having something cooking in the kitchen, too.

Among Minnie's other qualities were his charismatic personality, positive attitude, hallmark smile, commitment to hard work and giving back as well as a passion and love for life.

From a humble ranch in Cuba to the National Baseball Hall of Fame, what a way to honor such a remarkable life lived and service to this sport that he loved. Minnie was proud to be Cuban, to be an American and a professional baseball player.

He also would have been so very proud to be a Hall of Famer.

A big thank you to the baseball fans, and especially those Chicago White Sox fans who joined us today to cheer for Minnie one more time as he receives this fantastic honor.

If Minnie were here today, he would also say to all of you, thank you from the bottom of my heart. And he certainly would add, God bless you, my friends.

On behalf of my husband, Minnie, and the entire Miñoso family, we thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

JANE FORBES CLARK: As chairman of the board of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, it is my honor to welcome Tony Oliva into the Hall of Fame family and ask him to join me as Commissioner Manfred reads his plaque.

[APPLAUSE]

COMMISSIONER MANFRED: Tony Pedro Oliva Lopez artfully wielded left-handed line drive swing throughout 15-year career that saw him win three batting titles and top the American League in hits five times, in doubles four times.

Burst into the Big Leagues with eight straight All-Star seasons from 1964 through '71, earning MVP votes in all eight years.

As 1964 Rookie of the Year, paced A.L. in runs, hits, doubles, batting average and total bases. Won second straight A.L. batting crown, the first player to begin a career with back-to-back batting titles, while helping Minnesota win its first A.L. pennant in 1965. Awarded 1966 Gold Glove in right field.

[APPLAUSE]

TONY OLIVA: [Spanish]

First I'd like to say to Jane, Rob and the Cooperstown committee and the people who worked so hard to make this day so nice for us, it was beautiful. But I am here today -- I can't believe I'm here. I look to the left. I look to the right. This is such a memory.

This place right here look like my home in Cuba where my father built a field that the young kids was able to play baseball.

It looks exactly alike. You don't mind I mention that?

First of all, I want to thank our God, my mother and my father, my brothers and sisters, and my friends who encouraged me to follow my dream and come to the United States and play baseball.

(Indiscernible), the scouts of the Minnesota Twins that gave me the opportunity to sign me and come to the United States. After four days of spring training, Minnesota Twins didn't have enough room for me. They released me.

They took me to Charlotte, North Carolina, with a way to Cuba. But in those days they can't ship me to Cuba right away because we had a problem, Cuban invasion. They kept me there, where I meet these wonderful friends, Cuban baseball player Rigoberto Mendoza. He was speaking with the general manager of Charlotte, North Carolina. And the general manager, Fred Hass (phonetic), he speaks (indiscernible) Griffin, the owner of the ballclub. And the owner of the ballclub signed me again.

He gave me the opportunity to play in the rookie league. And you know, everybody here know everything after that was history.

[APPLAUSE]

I went to the rookie league doing my thing. I hit .410. After that I was Superman.

[LAUGHTER]

[APPLAUSE]

But I've been so blessed and so loved. The veteran, the Golden Days Era committee put me in the Hall of Fame. All those guys right there behind me, the Hall of Fame who are keeping me in the ballot for 45 wonderful years.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you, guys, thank you, thank you, thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you, guys. And you know, listen, when I hear the phone call from that beautiful lady right there, Jane, I couldn't believe it.

I answered the phone. My wife kissed me on the head. It was about 30 people in the room. Everybody was crying. I don't know what to say. I passed the phone to my good friend, Julie from the ballclub. I said, Julie, answer the phone. Julie said, no, no, that's your call.

I was so happy. You'll never know how happy I was. I was thinking I was on my last burst -- if I don't go into the Hall of Fame that time it's all over for Tony. And here I am, I'm 84 years old. Before I forget, I want to tell you, I was 84 three days ago here in Cooperstown.

[APPLAUSE]

How good can it be? That was beautiful. It was very nice.

I would like to thank you -- I get very dry -- the board of the committee, those people who work so hard, all my friends to vote and keep my name alive. And those people work so hard. They work harder than me to have me put myself in the Hall of Fame.

I'd like to thank you, to Calvin Griffith, the Minnesota Twins, for giving me the opportunity to play for Minnesota Twins and be my friend. Calvin Griffith was very nice to me.

I'd like to thank you, Carl Pohlad and the Pohlad family for keeping me in baseball over 60 years for Minnesota. I love Minnesota. I'd like to say thank you to Dave St. Peter, he's the general manager -- no, I'm sorry, the president of the Minnesota Twins. He's my friend, my good friend.

He's a good friend of the family. I don't have enough words to tell you how nice person he is, how good he is for me, for all this year. I know him since he was a little guy. But every day I see him, he's happy.

I'm so blessed to be able to play for the Minnesota Twins. I played for the Minnesota Twins all those years, because from the top to the bottom everybody is first class.

I'd like to thank you, all my teammates. If you know about my teammates, if you know about those coaches, I'd like, one coach here today, maybe there's more, but there's one coach here today. He's maybe 94 years old but he's old like me. He was my coach. But he killing me, Mr. Jack McKeon is here. And you know who I'm talking about.

[APPLAUSE]

He used to hit 100 ground balls to me and 100 fly balls to me every day (indiscernible) in 1961 and in 1962 and (indiscernible) was able catch a ground ball, fly ball. That was true, guys. But I was very proud five years later I won the Golden Glove in the American League.

[APPLAUSE]

I'm really proud to be able to go into the Hall of Fame today with a fellow like Orestes Miñoso. Orestes Miñoso, you have to remember, this division two, where he played for (indiscernible) Cuba, he was so good that he's good, the people say when Miñoso hit good, the ball dance the cha-cha-cha. That was his song. That was unbelievable.

And Miñoso, for us, he was the Jackie Robinson in America. But I still not believe that because you're Black or you're white you have to represent what you are. I think while you're Black and you play good, you play hard and give 100 percent, the people admire you, no matter if it's white or Black. People care for you.

[APPLAUSE]

I'd like to thank you, these people, they really took care of me. When I first came to Minnesota, I didn't have no family, no money. I no speak any English. And here today I don't speak it too good.

[LAUGHTER]

But you know one-third of the Minnesota Twins players was Spanish, especially 90 percent was Cuban. We got (indiscernible), Julio Beckett (phonetic), Camilo Pasqual, Pete Ramos, Orlando Martinez, (indiscernible) -- all those guys were there. (Indiscernible) was there. All those guys was there. I had a chance to play with them and they babysitted me. They were very nice to me.

Plus I played for some great baseball ball players like Harmon Killebrew. I tell everybody Killebrew was too nice to be a baseball player.

[LAUGHTER]

He was a good hitter, but he was a great person. Great person. I had the opportunity to play with another guy, my teammate. Just think that he should be in the Hall of Fame because in the '60s and '70s he was the No. 3 pitcher in the American League. This young man is Luis Tiant.

[APPLAUSE]

I think pretty soon you will see him here.

I played with my roommate, Rod Carew.

[APPLAUSE]

Him and me were roommates. 11 years. My good friend and brother, Orlando Cepeda, Danny Perez.

I had many, many great people, great friends. And now I talk to you a little bit, this guy today into the Hall of Fame, Big Papi. He was with the Minnesota Twins a few years.

We had a good time together. But the best thing happened to me, Papi, was when you went to Boston because Boston was, Martinez was there, Ramirez was there. It was good for him.

But at Minnesota we missed him.

[LAUGHTER]

But it's very good for him because in baseball, the way baseball works and the front office works they want the best for the players. And the front office, they're very happy that he is where he is, in Boston. He had all those great years.

And I no like what he did against us. Every time he face us he paid back. I no like that.

But having the opportunity, since I've been with Minnesota 61 years, I was in the Carl Pohlad era, wonderful. We enjoyed every moment when we win the World Series in '87 and '91.

I had the chance to be there from (indiscernible) park. They called me Papa. Nice guy. Very nice guy. The (indiscernible) were there. I worked in the minor league, you have a chance to teach all those guys a little bit.

I give a little bit of my advice. Not everything. Only a little bit.

[LAUGHTER]

But we did real work. We went to the World Series. And all the guys here today, I wish I could say, mention everybody, but it's too hard for me.

But I want to take another little thing for you guys because I don't want to take too much of your time. I want to introduce my family.

My wonderful, beautiful wife, when I met her in 1964, I speak no English and she no speak Spanish. And the hope was what, what, what?

[LAUGHTER]

When I call her on the telephone, on the telephone, she live in the country, they have a party line, you know. About 15 people were on the line.

[LAUGHTER]

No gringo understand me. But we have a great time. We had a good time.

Gentlemen, this is my wife, Gordette Oliva; my daughter, Anita; my son, Daniel; Pedro, he's not here today. He's at home. He doesn't like to travel. But he is watching. Enjoying it. My son, Rick. My grandson Yorel (phonetic). My grandson Alex, Nick, and the beautiful little Mary. And my brother Renaldo and my brother Juan Carlo. Juan Carlo he travels all over the world because he had the opportunity to play for the Cuban National Team.

Gentlemen, I'd like to say thank you to all the fans, all the wonderful fans, all the fans from all over the world.

I know a lot of you people traveling a long way to be here. I have a lot of family here today who have come for a long, long way. Friends who are here today who come out from long, long ways.

I appreciate you very much. Very much. And thank you all those people, especially those people from Minnesota. The fans from Minnesota. I lived in Minnesota for 60 years. I love Minnesota. Minnesota is my home. You have been very, very good to me and my family.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. I want to say a couple of words now to say something in Spanish.

[Spanish]

Thank you, thank you, thank you very much. And God bless you and baseball been very, very, very good to me and everybody who played this beautiful game. Thank you, guys. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

JANE FORBES CLARK: And as we continue our 2022 Induction Ceremony, as chairman of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, it is my honor to welcome Gil Hodges into the Hall of Fame family and ask his daughter, Irene, to join me as Commissioner Manfred reads the inscription on Gil's plaque.

COMMISSIONER MANFRED: Gilbert Ray Hodges, Gil, Brooklyn, N.L., 1943, 1947 through '57. Los Angeles, N.L., 1958-61. New York, N.L., 1962-63. Cleanup hitter and foundational cornerstone of the celebrated Dodger teams that won seven National League pennants and two World Series over 13 seasons in the late 1940s and '50s.

Eight-time All-Star, top 20 home runs in 11 straight years and hit four in one game in 1950. One of the finest defensive first basemen of his era. Won first three Gold Gloves awarded at the position from 1957 through '59. Finished with 370 home runs, third highest total among right-handed batters at the time of his retirement.

Managed Washington and New York for nine seasons from 1963 through '71, leading the Miracle Mets to 1969 World Series title.

[APPLAUSE]

IRENE HODGES: Thank you. Thank you very much. I would like to begin by offering a very humble and grateful thank you to a few very special people that have been with me on this journey.

First and foremost, chairman of the Hall of Fame, Ms. Jane Forbes Clark. I thank you for your most gracious and heartfelt welcome to the Hodges family. Each and every experience leading to today has been flawless and unforgettable as a result of your dedication and leadership.

I'd also like to thank Josh Rawitch, Hall of Fame president, who has stood by my side since the beginning in support of my family. Your kindness has always been so appreciated.

And certainly not least, two very special people who have held my hand and my heart along the way, Jon and Whitney. You are such a dynamic team. Each and every family representative is so lucky to have you guide us and cheer us as we prepare for this special moment in time.

I would also like to thank my family for being here, for being part of the most wonderful celebration for my dad. It is such a privilege to stand here today as the Hall of Fame honors my father. He was a very humble man, but he would be so proud to be here with the best of the best in baseball.

50 years ago not only did the Mets and the Dodgers lose one of their heroes, we lost a husband and a father. Our greatest gift, although my father's life was cut so short, was his influence on those around him.

His teammate, Jackie Robinson, once said, "A life is not important except for the impact it leaves on others."

My father sincerely believed that and led a life that has impacted others in a positive way. You will hear a lot today about Gil Hodges, the baseball player, what he did on the field and in the dugout.

You will hear how he was the dominant first baseman of the 1950s. You will hear how he led all Major League first basemen during that decade in home runs, RBIs, hits and games played.

And you will hear also how he took a team affectionately known as the Lovable Losers and turn them into the Miracle Mets in just two short seasons.

[APPLAUSE]

But I am his daughter. And I am here to tell you about the man he was. Nobody loved the game of baseball more than my dad. He worked tirelessly to make it to the Major Leagues.

He achieved his dream, appearing in his first game with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1943. But he loved his country even more. After his very first game with the Brooklyn Dodgers, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps.

My dad was a selfless person, and he knew he had to serve his country. He would leave his baseball career behind, never knowing if he would make it back, and he would serve and protect his country.

My dad proudly served in the Battle of Okinawa, where he was awarded the Bronze Medal and a Combat V Medal for Heroism Under Fire.

[APPLAUSE]

Through all this, my father never lost sight of his faith and his love of people. During his time in Okinawa, he would befriend Japanese children who were so frightened by the American soldiers.

My father would gather the children from the village, along with his fellow Marines, and teach them baseball. It gave them some joy back in their life where the war had robbed them of.

Later on, when Jackie Robinson became the first African American to break the color barrier in Major League Baseball, nothing was more important to my dad than giving Jackie all of his support.

We were like family with the Robinsons. Jackie's kids played in our house. We played in theirs. My dad was not only teammates with Jackie but they were family.

My father made everyone feel comfortable and accepting of Jackie when he came to the big leagues.

Recently I heard a story about my dad, which I believe shows the support Jackie had from his teammates. During a game, Jackie was being heckled by the opposing dugout nonstop.

At one point, my dad had had enough of that. He put down his glove. He went to the top step of the dugout, and said, "If anyone else has anything to say, let them come out here right now and we will settle it." Needless to say, nobody came out and no one said another word.

[APPLAUSE]

My dad had an open heart to Jackie. They were close until the day my dad passed. On the day of my father's funeral, Jackie cried uncontrollably, saying, "Next to my son's death this was the worst day of my life."

Soon after my father passed, so did Jackie. Duke Snyder said my dad was a great ball player, but he was an even greater man. He set an atmosphere in the Brooklyn team in which there was never any animosity or jealousy.

He was a true leader of men and built camaraderie among his teammates. Everyone wanted to win, but never put themselves above anyone else on that field.

My father had a special relationship with the Brooklyn fans. Even though he was from Indiana, he loved Brooklyn and became a part of his community.

He went to church there. He walked to the stores. He would take us sledding when there was snow. There was never any pretense about him.

He was an ordinary man and everybody knew him. He was respected, and he showed respect to everyone as well.

When my father slumped in the 1952 World Series, Brooklyn fans loved him. Who goes 0-for-21 and gets a standing ovation every time at bat? That's exactly what happened to my dad.

The Brooklyn fans loved my father and they loved their team. So when the Dodgers finally beat the Yankees in the 1955 World Series, it was one of the greatest days that Brooklyn had ever known. There was no more wait til next year.

So it's easy to understand that when the Dodgers left Brooklyn, the borough lost a piece of its heart. My dad was also proud of being a part of a Dodger team that won it all in 1959.

After his playing days ended, his strong leadership skills would lead him to a managerial position, with his biggest days coming back in New York and with the New York Mets.

Some of his players feared him. Others complained about his platooning system, but they respected him. He was a fair manager. He wanted the best from every player on the field and believed they could do that.

He felt the team owed that to the fans and to the front office. The expectation: You always give 100 percent.

My father already had a reputation for being a stern manager with the Washington Senators. He was very strict on bed check during road trips. And when he found out that four of his players had skipped bed check, he held a team meeting the next day in the clubhouse. Never one to embarrass anyone, he told them he was aware that some of the players had skipped bed check. And there was a cigar box on his desk. At the end of the day, he wanted \$100 from each of those players. At the end of the day, there was \$700 in that box.

[LAUGHTER]

It was important to my dad to create an atmosphere of honesty in his clubhouse, and he did just that. The most important lesson he taught his players and his children, never lie. He would tell us, you need to look in that mirror and have respect for the person you see.

I know there are many here today that would agree that my father's finest hour was managing the Miracle Mets of the 1969 World Series championship. His immediate reaction to my mom, "We did it; we brought the championship home." And that's how he felt.

He truly loved his team, and he loved managing them. He knew how good they can be and how successful they would be. And now they believed it.

The great Met pitcher Jerry Koosman said, Gil Hodges was the most important part of our '69 Met team because he made us believe in ourselves.

The '69 Mets did what nobody thought could be done, and that made my father so proud for his team. I am proud today that we have four of our amazing Mets with us to honor my dad -- Cleon Jones, Ed Kranepool, Art Shamsky and Ron Swoboda.

[APPLAUSE]

I would also like to thank Maxine Agee who represented Tommie Agee, of course, and to Sarah Seaver, who as we all know, loved my dad -- my dad loved Tom and had the utmost respect for him. So I'm so happy they are all here.

[APPLAUSE]

I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to thank the most outstanding Met I know. That's Jay Horwitz and his lovely lady, Linda. Thank you both so much for all you have done to help celebrate this very special time in our family's lives.

My mom loves you both so much. Your daily calls brighten her day. And we love you both so much.

My dad's humility ever present. In his office, right after the big win, my mom said to him, "Gil, call your mother, she must be so excited." My dad's reply, "Joan, that's a long distance call. I don't think I should make that from the office. I'll wait until I go home."

Here, he had just achieved a miracle of all baseball miracles, yet he would only do what he thought was the right thing. That was my dad.

[APPLAUSE]

Today, I am especially happy for my mother. When the call came from the Hall of Fame, and I heard "this is Jane Forbes Clark, and it is my honor" -- I began sobbing probably as much as I did when I lost my father.

I was so beyond happy for him and even thrilled that my mom, at 95, would be able to hear this news. My mom is watching today from our home in Brooklyn.

And to my dad...

[APPLAUSE]

... and to my dad, I love you so much and I miss you every day. And I know you're smiling from heaven now with our sister Barbara who we miss unbelievably. And without a doubt I know you're celebrating with Tom and the Boys of Summer. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

JANE FORBES CLARK: As we continue this afternoon, it is my honor as the chairman of the National Baseball Hall of Fame to welcome Buck O'Neil into the Hall of Fame family and ask his niece, Dr. Angela Terry, to join me as Commissioner Manfred reads the inscription on Buck's plaque.

COMMISSIONER MANFRED: John Jordan O'Neil, "Buck": Character, integrity and dignity defined a life dedicated to baseball, as player, manager, scout, coach and champion of Negro Leagues legacies.

Starred at first base for Negro American League powerhouse Kansas City Monarchs of the 1930s and '40s, winning Negro World Series in 1942. Took the helm as successful Monarchs manager of the 1940s through mid-1950s; scouted for the Cubs, helping numerous Black players transition to the American and National Leagues, then became the first Black coach in N.L. or A.L. history with Chicago in 1962. In later life, gave voice to the Negro Leagues eloquently preserving its culture and legends.

[APPLAUSE]

DR. ANGELA TERRY: Good afternoon. As one of Uncle John's heirs, I am appreciative of this opportunity to express the family's deepest gratitude for this highest recognition for his baseball career.

[APPLAUSE]

Though any member of the family could share with you their memorable moments with Uncle John, whether that moment was when he made them feel 10 feet tall, or whether that moment was when he gave them the "keep on keeping on" pep talk. Or when they realized how blessed they were to have such a special uncle.

But I am the one standing before you today, primarily because I hold the longest membership in AARP.

[LAUGHTER]

[APPLAUSE]

And age does indeed have its privileges.

[LAUGHTER]

So I'll begin by expressing the family's thanks to the Early Baseball Era Committee for their selection of Uncle John as a member of the Class of 2022.

We also applaud the committee for not subjectively limiting their interpretation of an exceptional career in baseball to a singular focus upon statistics.

[APPLAUSE]

In other words, expanding their view to include the totality of one's work in baseball.

[APPLAUSE]

In addition, the family would like to thank Mrs. Clark, chairman of the board of directors, and Mr. Rawitch, president of the Hall of Fame, for their calls of congratulations. Your words added an additional song of jubilation to our hearts. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

If Uncle John were here with us this afternoon, his usual spirit of humility and gratefulness would be on full display. He would quickly deflect the limelight away from himself to focus upon those who loved, inspired and supported his lifelong passion for baseball.

For example, to name just a few: Aunt Ora, his beloved wife of 50-plus years and his best friend.

Dr. B.B. Martin, Black owner of the Memphis Red Sox, who, in signing Uncle John, in 1937, made his dreams of playing in the Negro Leagues a reality.

J. L. Wilkinson, the white owner of the Kansas City Monarchs, with whom he signed next, and one who Uncle John always said treated him like a son.

Ken Burns, award-winning filmmaker and documentarian, who has shone a mega light on the Negro Leagues in his highly acclaimed documentary "Baseball in 1994."

And last, but in no way least, Bob Kendrick.

[APPLAUSE]

President of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum would be acknowledged and thanked by Uncle John for his leadership in advancing the mission, the prominence and the vitality of the museum. Thank you, Bob.

[APPLAUSE]

A precious few outside the family knew that Uncle John had always wanted Bob to be his successor as museum president. Moreover, Uncle John was highly attuned to talent, whether it be on or off the playing field.

Uncle John would also probably weave into his words to you this afternoon the notion of "timing." That is the positivity with which he viewed a majority of the occurrences in his life.

In this light, he would remind all of us that his playing career was in the Negro Leagues and that today he was being inducted into the same class as a Black baseball pioneer Bud Fowler and a former Negro League All-Star, Minnie Miñoso.

[APPLAUSE]

For those who knew Uncle John, can't you almost hear him excitedly voicing one of his favorite phrases, and I quote, "Man, oh, man, nothing could be better." Poor imitation.

[APPLAUSE]

And though Uncle John did not wear his religion on his sleeve, he was a deeply religious man. In fact, if his visits to family included a Sunday, you knew you would be accompanying him to a Methodist service that Sunday, regardless of your denomination.

[LAUGHTER]

And with those visits, I came to learn over the years some of Uncle John's favorite bible verses. One he often referenced was Romans 5:1-5, which reads, in part, and I quote, "Affliction produces endurance. And endurance produces character. And character produces hope."

[APPLAUSE]

Personally, I sometimes wondered if this particular verse was one of his favorites because of the racial inequities he had undoubtedly faced during his 94 years of life.

However, I never asked him and concluded that this particular verse was a part of his north star.

Our Uncle John was a man for all seasons, whose core was brotherly love. And perhaps there was no better public display of that love than when he would sing this song to adults and children audiences alike, including when he stood on this very stage in 2006 to honor the 17 Negro Leaguers elected to the Hall of Fame that year.

The lyrics to that song are only ten words long. And I quote, "The greatest thing in all my life is loving you."

Thank you for loving our uncle.

[APPLAUSE]

JANE FORBES CLARK: Ladies and gentlemen, as chairman of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, it is my honor to welcome David Ortiz to the Hall of Fame family.

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

And I'd like to ask Commissioner Manfred to please read the inscription on David's plaque.

COMMISSIONER MANFRED: "David Américo Ortiz, Big Papi, Minnesota, A.L., 1997-2002; Boston, A.L., 2003-16. Powerhouse left-handed slugger who was at his best in the clutch with legendary postseason performances that took the Red Sox from championship drought to three World Series titles in a ten-year stretch. Eight times named Top Designated Hitter while earning ten All-Star selections. Drove in 100 or more runs in 10 seasons, leading American League three times. His 541 home runs, 632 doubles and 1,768 RBI are all-time highs among designated hitters. Extra innings walk-off hits in Games 4 and 5 of 2004 ALCS netted series MVP honors; set A.L. record for batting average, .688, en route to 2013 World Series MVP."

[APPLAUSE]

DAVID ORTIZ: [SPANISH] Wow, Cooperstown. [SPANISH] Before everything, I want to thank God for giving me the opportunity to be here today and for giving me the joy of being able to travel this path. This path that has allowed me to be here today and hopefully inspire everyone to believe in yourself.

Thank you, dear God, for giving me the opportunity and strength all these years to stay strong and keep my feet on the ground through ups and downs and all the sacrifices that I had to overcome to be able to be here with you today.

Just to let you guys know, I'm real. And I'm going to talk to you guys in English and Spanish.

[SPANISH]

This is such an incredible day, an incredible honor, and I'm so humbled to be on this stage right now. The last six months I received a special phone call to be elected to the Hall of Fame. I've been thinking about how I got here to this stage, Cooperstown, today.

I've been thinking about my life, my career, and most of all, the people that believe in me. I also have been thinking about the lesson I've been taking from their support, and the power that we all have to make a positive difference in this world.

I want to thank the baseball writers for making me the first designated hitter in the history of Cooperstown to be selected in the first ballot.

[APPLAUSE]

You guys got it going on. Thanks, guys. To Major League Baseball, for all the support you have given me throughout my professional career, I really appreciate MLB. Love you.

This game is so important here in America and around the world. Thank you for all the support you have given baseball as a sport so that it continues to be part of our culture and part of the heart of all the fans worldwide.

Cooperstown, I would also like to thank the Village of Cooperstown for opening your door to us, especially to the Hall of Fame. Jane, Josh, Chester and Winnie, thank you very much for being able to have us here and treat my family and everyone else the right way. Thank you. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

I would also like to thank all the members of the Hall of Fame present today. My respect always to all of you. Thank you for being here. It's an amazing honor to be part of this elite group that you already are.

My family [SPANISH]. Alex, Jesse, David. You guys know that without you guys, this would never happen. You guys were the engine that started this motor every day for me to get it going and keep on going. I love you guys from the bottom of my heart. Thank you for being there for me always.

Just like your mother, Tiffany Ortiz, wherever she's at right now, thank you very much, Tiffany, for supporting me in my career. You're amazing. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

[SPANISH]

I want to thank the United States of America from the bottom of my heart as an American citizen who welcomed me with open arms since I was practically a child and giving me the opportunity to develop and fulfill all my dreams and then some more. Thank you very much, U.S.

[APPLAUSE]

And to all my American friends, consider this an open invitation to visit my island, the Dominican Republic, a special place where we have a lot of good and happy people, beautiful beaches where you guys can go when you're freezing here. So show up at the Dominican.

[APPLAUSE]

Before I was Big Papi, before the Red Sox, before the Twins, I was just a kid playing ball in the Dominican Republic.

To all my coaches from winter ball, minor league and the big league, I could not have done it without you. A guy named Ramon de los Santos, (speaking Spanish) and Fernando (indiscernible), who called me and signed me to the Seattle Mariners when I was only 16 years old. They saw something in me, and they fought for it.

Once I was in the United States, another guy, another gentleman named James Cullen (phonetic), the Mariner minor league coordinator, made a huge impact on me.

Also, Jim Beattie, who is also here somewhere, that's another guy who made a major impact on me as a player development director.

And then there was a guy named Mike Goff, who was my manager, who taught me and our entire team so much. He always used to tell us, "You have to go hard. Can't take things for granted."

He was hard on me, but I know it was coming from a good place. On the last day of the season, he told me, "The reason I was so hard on you is because out of all the players here I think you are the one that can have an amazing career in the big leagues. Go and get it, big boy." Thank you, Mike.

[APPLAUSE]

When I was traded to the Twins, there were two guys in the minor league system that helped to build my confidence. John Russo, my manager in the first A league, and Al Newman, who was my manager in Double-A, the same year that John Rosso was my manager in the first A league. These two guys built up my confidence so much that I ended up in the big league that year.

I learned so many big things from them. These two guys were father figures and made me believe that they worked with me every day.

[APPLAUSE]

Because they believed in me, I wanted to show them that I could do it too.

I also had to thank the Minnesota Twins for bringing me into the big league. Even though it didn't work out the way everybody expected, I learned from my time there that once I got my shot in any other place I was going to work hard to never let it go until the last day I played.

To all of these new Hall of Famers, I want to congratulate you. It's an honor to be in this stage with you. Mr. Tony Oliva, Mr. Jim Kaat, those guys always were around with the Twins giving us good advice. Congratulations to the two of you.

[APPLAUSE]

And there is another Twins Hall of Famer that I got to know really well, and I miss him so much, Mr. Kirby Puckett.

[APPLAUSE]

He taught me so much about the game. And I mean, he gave me so much advice and he was so wonderful to me that when I went to Boston, I started wearing his number, No. 34. God bless you, Kirby, wherever God have you.

[APPLAUSE]

Then the Red Sox.

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

From Mr. Joe Henry to Linda Henry, to Tom Werner to Larry Aquino, Phil Morris, who was there when I came to Boston. And of course, my main man, Sam Kennedy, I can't thank you guys enough for building me up and supporting me throughout the years.

I also want to thank my man, John McCormick, who was the traveling secretary while I played. And my little sis, Pam Kim. That organization made me the man that I am today. They educated me about the game, but they also educated me about my life: Community service, connecting with people. The Jimmy Fund, the Children's Fund. That's why I started the David Ortiz Children's Fund that has provided life-saving surgery for children in the Dominican Republic and New England.

[APPLAUSE]

I want to thank everyone that work so hard in my foundation to make this happen. All this stuff that as a player you get connected with, now that I'm not a player, I know what that means.

The impact that we have, I know what that feels like now to have someone supporting you at the hospital.

There were a people that made it possible for me to become a Red Sox. I have to thank my man, Dave Jauss, who watched me playing winter ball while he was the manager for the Licey in the Dominican Republic. And the minute the Red Sox call him, he shows up showing me some love right away. Thanks, Dave.

I want to thank this guy right here, who you also know. No. 45.

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

Mi compadre Pedro.

[SPANISH]

I can talk about Pedro all day long. I'm going to let it go now. And my agent Fernando, who has been with me since I was 17. Fernando, man, I can't tell you no more, man. I can ask for no more.

My man Diego, who was also my agent at the time. You guys have been incredible. I love you guys.

When I first came to Boston, I had a manager named Grady Little, who was the manager at the time, and in my very first at-bat against the Twins during spring training, I tried to move a runner over.

And I thought when I got back to the dugout everybody was going to high-five me. Everybody stay sitting. And the manager pulled me to the side and said, "Hey, big boy, I don't want you to be here to move them over, I want you to be here to bring them in." The rest is history.

[APPLAUSE]

And then I was lucky enough to play for two guys named Terry Francona, who at the time had a guy named Joe Farrell as a pitching coach who took over as a manager.

These guys, they did nothing but build my confidence, even through tough times.

I love you guys and I always am going to have you in my heart. Tito, wherever you are? You know Papi got you. John as well.

[APPLAUSE]

To all my former teammates here today showing love, gotta start with the Twins, man. Hall of Famer Paul Molitor, who taught me well when I was with the Twins; LaTroy Hawkins; Eddie Guardado; Corey Koskie; Jacque Jones, Torii Hunter; Matt Lowden [phonetic], Brad Rocky [phonetic], all those guys got my back when I played for the Twins. I love you guys, man, from the bottom of my heart.

And I also got teammates right here, Los Chicos Locos, Johnny Damon, Mikey Lowell, Dustin Pedroia, Trot Nixon, Jason Varitek, Tim Wakefield, Kevin Youkilis and of course No. 45.

[APPLAUSE]

I want you guys to know, even with the God-given talent I have, I don't think I would have made it without the support and love coming from all of you.

All I was trying to do was bring the team together. That starts with honesty and openness. My smaller teammate, where are you at? Pedroia? Pee Wee, grabbed me by the neck one time, and he told me, "If you keep on pulling the ball, I'm going to whoop you." And guess what? Big Papi got caught up on fire.

[LAUGHTER]

My teammates always were there for me, and that's something that I am always going to appreciate. And in life, remember, our teammates are a second family. Love you guys, man, forever.

I can't forget about Jason Varitek. That man is serious.

[APPLAUSE]

I love you, Cap.

It's been almost 20 years since my first day in Boston. We have some incredible memories. When I think about Boston, I definitely think about 2004, 2007, and of course 2013, after the city was shaken by the marathon bombing, I had never seen a city bounce back and reunite like Boston.

[APPLAUSE]

When I think about Boston, I also think about the last game I played, standing on that field at Fenway Park. It felt like the whole city of New England and each one and every one of you was surrounding me and was showing me all your love.

I will always be Boston and I will always be there for you, Boston. I love you, Boston.

[APPLAUSE]

[SPANISH]

I always try to live my life in a way that supports others, that make a positive influence in the world. And if my story can remind you of anything, let it remind you that when you believe in someone, you can change their world; you can change their future. Just like so many people who believe in me.

To everyone that believe in me from my family, to coaches to teammates, to fans, know I could not have done this without you.

My Hall of Fame plaque represents each one of you. And I'm going to thank you guys for the rest of my life. Thank you very much and God bless you all.

[SPANISH]