

**CLASS OF  
2007**

## Harold Cooper, Jr.



General Manager  
Columbus  
1955-68

IL President  
1978-90

IL Vice-President  
1991-Present

As a sixth grader in 1936, Columbus, OH native Harold Cooper was given an unpaid job as a clubhouse assistant with the local Minor League team, the Red Birds, partially to keep him from sneaking into the ballpark without a ticket. Harold's relationship with professional baseball and the stadium that now bears his name goes back even further when as a youth growing-up near what was then Red Bird Stadium he would deliver lunch to his grandfather who worked as the foreman for stadium construction. After advancing to the position of "paid" clubhouse boy, time at The Ohio State University and with the U.S. Coast Guard during WW II took him away from baseball and the ballpark. Returning to baseball in 1947, Harold worked in the Columbus based office of the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues (Minor League Baseball) before heading to Hutchinson, KS to run the Western Association club. After great success in Hutchinson, Harold returned to Columbus and entered private business before baseball came calling.

Following the 1954 season, the Cardinals moved their American Association affiliate from Columbus to Omaha, leaving Ohio's capital city without professional baseball. When the International League's Ottawa franchise needed a new home, Cooper was instrumental in landing a slot for Columbus in the IL in 1955. He was named the first General Manager of the new Columbus Jets, a post in which he would serve for 14 seasons. Personable, well-organized and widely respected, Cooper guided his club to a tremendous amount of success both on and off the field throughout the late 1950's and 60's. In 1965 he was honored as the International League Executive of the Year, as well as The Sporting News Triple-A Executive of the Year.

Cooper stepped down as General Manager of the Jets in 1968 and entered politics for what would turn-out to be a 17-year run as a County Commissioner. Two years later, the club was forced to drop out of the League due to soaring maintenance costs in a deteriorating ballpark. In the mid '70's County Commissioner Cooper helped spearhead the effort for Franklin County to purchase Jet Stadium and perform a multi-million dollar renovation, setting the stage for the city's return to the IL in 1977. The following winter, while still a County Commissioner, Cooper agreed to become President of the International League.

During his 13-year run as IL President Cooper earned several honors and distinctions. In 1984, Columbus' Franklin County Stadium was renamed Cooper Stadium. One year later he received the George Trautman Award (named for the former National Association and Columbus Red Birds' President who first hired Cooper in 1936) given to a National Association Executive for distinguished service to baseball. In 1988 Cooper received the Warren Giles Award in recognition of outstanding service as a League President.

Since retiring after the 1990 season, Cooper has served as a valued consultant and Vice-President of the International League.

- \* IL Executive of the Year 1965
- \* Winner of 1985 George Trautman Award
- \* Winner of 1988 Warren Giles Award
- \* 13 Years of Service as IL President

## George Sisler, Jr.



General Manager  
Rochester  
1955-65

IL President  
1966-76

General Manager  
Columbus  
1977-89

IL Vice-President  
1990-2006

When George H. Sisler, Jr. became General Manager of the Rochester Red Wings in 1955, it began a tenure of five-plus decades in the International League for the St. Louis native. A classy gentleman and a proud member of a distinguished baseball family, George left his own mark on the game he loved. George graduated from Colgate University as a three-sport star on the same day his father was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. He enjoyed a brief career as a Minor League player after being signed by the St. Louis Browns. He served in the Army during World War II and the Korean War before returning to baseball as an executive.

Sisler worked in the St. Louis Cardinals' organization in a variety of administrative and scouting roles. He would eventually become an icon in Red Wings' history while serving as General Manager from 1955-65. George resigned his position as Red Wings' GM following the '65 season to become President of the International League, a post in which he served proudly for 11 years. In 1976 when an opportunity arose to bring baseball back to Columbus, OH he was recruited by long-time friend Harold Cooper to come to Columbus and head the operation of the newly formed Columbus Clippers. The new GM of the Clippers hired a staff and laid the groundwork for one of Minor League Baseball's most successful franchises. Under Sisler's guidance, Columbus was awarded the Larry MacPhail Promotional Trophy in 1977, 1979, and 1984.

Sisler was no stranger to awards and honors. The four-time IL Executive of the Year was also recognized three times by The Sporting News as the Triple-A Executive of the Year (1962, 1977, and 1979). In 1989, his final season with the Clippers, Columbus won the first-ever Triple-A Bob Freitas Award, presented to the organization demonstrating long-standing excellence of operations in the ballpark and in the front office. That winter Sisler was also honored as the "King of Baseball" for his longtime dedication and service to the game.

Known as an innovative thinker, George was a long-time member of the Official Playing Rules Committee for all of professional baseball. George pushed for the designated hitter rule long before it was adopted in the American League and was also instrumental in the adoption of the suspended game rules implemented throughout Minor League Baseball for many years. Coincidentally, Major League Baseball implemented portions of the suspended game rules during the 2007 season.

Sisler continued to serve as a consultant to the Clippers as well as a Vice-President of the International League until his passing on December 31, 2006. The International League will forever be indebted to George Sisler, Jr. for the 52 years in which he served the League and its clubs, helping bring about a long period of success and prosperity unmatched in the 124-year history of the League.

- \* IL Executive of the Year 1964, 1977, 1979-80
- \* 1989 "King of Baseball"
- \* 11 Years of Service as IL President
- \* Officer of the League for 28 Years