

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE - 2008

Gene Cook

Executive

Born January 11, 1932 in Greenfield, TN

Died February 14, 2002 in Toledo, OH

NOTES: General Manager, Toledo Mud Hens, 1978-1998
Executive Vice-President, Toledo Mud Hens, 1998-2002
International League Executive of the Year - 1980



Made General Manager in 1978, Gene Cook saw the team's attendance rise from an average of less than 100,000 per year before his arrival to consistently over 300,000 annually. He did it with promotions. USA Today Baseball Weekly said that Cook "accomplished one of the great public relations moves in the history of Minor League Baseball" when he enlisted Toledoan Jamie Farr's M*A*S*H character Max Klinger to incorporate support for the Mud Hens in the popular television show. This made the already well-known Mud Hens "a household name around the world."

He may have given the team an even bigger boost in popularity when he led the way for their return to downtown Toledo. Gene Cook had the vision that the future growth of professional baseball in Toledo depended on a new downtown ballpark. He worked to make it happen, and it did. Indications are, after the early years of success, that this may have been his best promotion of all.

Cook had many accomplishments, of which his career with the Mud Hens was just one. He won nine varsity letters at the University of Toledo and continued afterwards with a short career in professional football. In Toledo city government, he won election to City Council 15 times and served in many leadership roles. He had a successful business career. Most importantly, he is remembered as a friend, husband, father, and grandfather.