

Date of Hearing: April 26, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Laura Friedman, Chair

ACR 52 (Patterson) – As Amended April 19, 2021

SUBJECT: Tom Seaver Memorial Highway

SUMMARY: Designates from East Jensen Avenue to Ventura Street (from postmile R21.1 to postmile R23.2) of State Highway Route 41 in Fresno County as the Tom Seaver Memorial Highway.

EXISTING LAW: Assigns the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) the responsibility of operating and maintaining state highways. This includes the installation and maintenance of highway signs.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown, but the measure requests that Caltrans only erect the appropriate signage upon receiving donations from non-state sources covering the cost.

COMMENTS: Tom Seaver was born in the City of Fresno, California, to Betty Lee and Charles Henry Seaver. Tom was the youngest of four children and grew up on Arthur Avenue in Fresno, where his family were longtime members of the Sunnyside Country Club. Tom attended Fresno High School and pitched for the school's baseball team, compensating for his lack of size and strength by developing great control on the mound.

Seaver joined the United States Marine Corps Reserve on June 28, 1962 and served with the United States Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, at Twentynine Palms, California, through July 1963. After six months of active duty in the reserve, he enrolled at Fresno City College and remained a part-time member of the reserve until his eight-year commitment ended in 1970.

The University of Southern California (USC) recruited Seaver to play college baseball and offered him a scholarship after he pitched for the Alaska Goldpanners of Fairbanks in the summer of 1964, during which he pitched and hit a grand slam to win a game in a national tournament. As a sophomore in 1965, Seaver posted a 10-2 record pitching for the USC Trojans and was selected in the 10th round of the 1965 Major League Baseball (MLB) draft by the Los Angeles Dodgers, who failed to sign Seaver to a contract.

In 1966, the New York Mets were awarded the right to sign Seaver, who made the Mets' opening day roster in 1967. Before his first All-Star game, Seaver introduced himself to Hank Aaron, assuming Aaron would not know who he was, and asked for his autograph, to which Aaron replied, "Kid, I know who you are, and before your career is over, I guarantee you everyone in this stadium will, too".

Hank Aaron stated that Seaver was the toughest pitcher he ever faced, and after an impressive 20-season career in Major League Baseball, only Seaver and Walter Johnson had compiled 300 wins, 3,000 strikeouts, and earned run averages under 3.00, and Seaver had the third most strikeouts, 3,640, in Major League Baseball history, which is now sixth all time. Seaver is tied with Nolan Ryan for the seventh-most shutouts in MLB history, holds the record for consecutive 200-strikeout seasons with nine, spanning from 1968 to 1976, inclusive, and set records by striking out 10 consecutive batters and making 16 opening-day starts.

The Mets retired Seaver's uniform No. 41 in 1988 in a Tom Seaver Day ceremony, making him the franchise's first player to be so honored. Seaver was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame on January 7, 1992, with the then-highest percentage of votes for induction with 99% of the vote, being named on 425 out of 430 ballots. Seaver is one of two players enshrined in the Baseball Hall of Fame with a Mets cap on his plaque, along with Mike Piazza, and was also inducted into the New York Mets Hall of Fame, the Marine Corps Sports Hall of Fame, and the Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame.

On September 28, 2006, ESPN chose Seaver as the "Hometown Hero" for the Mets franchise. Seaver made a return to Shea Stadium during the "Shea Goodbye" closing ceremony on September 28, 2008, where he threw out the final pitch in the history of the stadium to Piazza, and, along with Piazza, he opened the Mets' new home stadium, Citi Field, with the ceremonial first pitch on April 13, 2009.

In 2019, New York City renamed 126th Street, the street outside Citi Field, Seaver Way and changed the ballpark's address to 41 Seaver Way, a salute to the number he wore throughout his career.

The 2013 MLB All-Star Game was dedicated to Seaver, and he concluded the introduction of the starting lineups ceremony by throwing out the ceremonial first pitch.

In 1999, Sporting News ranked Seaver 32nd on its list of the 100 greatest baseball players of all time, the only player on the list to have spent a majority of his career with the Mets.

In 2016, ESPN ranked Seaver 34th on its list of the greatest MLB players of all time, while The Athletic ranked him the 41st greatest player of all time in 2020.

Seaver met his wife of 54 years, Nancy Lynn McIntyre, in Fresno, and they have two daughters, Sarah and Anne, and four grandsons. In retirement, Tom and Nancy returned to California to pursue their dream of raising grapes in Napa Valley. Tom worked daily in his vineyard and lived in Napa valley for over 20 years before his passing in 2020.

According to the author, "ACR 52 seeks to honor Mr. Tom Seaver for his accomplishments during his lifetime as well as his career in Baseball."

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

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