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American Commemorative Panels: Major League Baseball All-Stars: Willie Stargell

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Major League Baseball™ All-Stars: Willie Stargell



Willie Stargell (1940–2001) of the *Pittsburgh Pirates™* was a powerful six-foot-two, left-handed slugger famous for smashing baseballs out of stadiums. At one point, he held the record for hitting the longest homers in half the *National League™* ballparks.

Born in Earlsboro, Oklahoma, Stargell was of Seminole Indian and African-American heritage. During his teens, he lived in a housing project in Alameda, California, where he began playing organized baseball. In the late 1950s, he overcame racial intimidation while playing on some of the *Pirates™* farm teams in the South. Called up to the *Majors™* in 1962, he played 21 seasons, all for Pittsburgh, and hammered a total of 475 home runs.

When the great Roberto Clemente died in a plane crash in 1972, Stargell became the new leader of the *Pirates*. He handed out “Stargell Stars” to teammates for outstanding play and promoted team harmony, showing special

talent for bridging gaps between white, black, and Latino players. Nicknamed “Pops,” he instigated the adoption of the Sister Sledge disco hit “We Are Family” as the unofficial anthem for the '79 *Pirates* team. That season he tied for *National League™* Most Valuable Player, then garnered MVP honors in both the *National League Championship Series™* and the *Pirates* upset win over the *Baltimore Orioles™* in the *World Series* championship.



Hall of Famer Joe Morgan recalled what was special about Stargell: “When I played, there were 600 baseball players and 599 of them loved Willie Stargell. He’s the only guy I could have said that about.”

In 1988, in his first year of eligibility, Stargell was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Illustrator Kadir Nelson based the stamp art on historic photographs of Stargell at bat. Phil Jordan served as art director.



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