

# 'Classic baseball man' to receive Rickey Award

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The Arizona Republic

Nov. 7, 2003 12:00 AM

Roland Hemond is only one man, but he has done the work of dozens in his 52 years in professional baseball.

He helped stabilize the Milwaukee Braves farm system in the 1950s and helped give the expansion Los Angeles Angels wings in 1961. He served as general manager of the Chicago White Sox (1970-85) and Baltimore Orioles (1988-95). He created the Arizona Fall League and helped chart the course of the expansion Diamondbacks from 1996-2000. He is currently executive adviser to White Sox GM Kenny Williams.

Behind the scenes, he lobbied for pension and medical/insurance plans for non-uniformed personnel and scouts, and served with charity groups, including the Chicago Baseball Cancer Committee, for more than 20 years.

He did it all with little fanfare.

That will change Nov. 14.

Hemond, 73, who resides in Phoenix and Chicago, will be in Denver to receive the Branch Rickey Award, which honors individuals in baseball who contribute unselfishly to their communities and serve as strong role models.

Hemond will be the first non-uniformed recipient of the award, first given in 1992 by the Rotary Club of Denver. Each of the 30 major league teams nominates an individual, and approximately 300 people, including members of the media, vote.

Diamondbacks pitchers Todd Stottlemyre and Curt Schilling won the award in 2000 and 2001, respectively.

"I'm very honored," Hemond said. "Mr. Rickey meant so much to our game. I never really had the chance to meet him, but I always admired him and the impact he made."

Hemond cited the role of Rickey, a Brooklyn Dodgers executive, in helping Jackie Robinson break the game's color barrier in 1947.

"It was a tremendous landmark and long in coming. It took a lot of courage to step forward," Hemond said.

Hemond stepped forward in 1983 at the annual owners meetings and spoke passionately about the non-uniformed pension issue. It wasn't part of the agenda, but the owners passed it in a landslide vote.

Hemond, with genuine humility, has difficulty talking about himself, but there are plenty of others willing to sing his praises.

"I've known Roland for 47, 48 years, and he is the classic baseball man. Nobody loves the game more, and I can't imagine anyone more deserving of this award," Commissioner Bud Selig said.

Diamondbacks GM Joe Garagiola Jr. said Hemond was a stabilizing influence in the organization's early days.

"I think his enthusiasm is the same now as it was when he first joined the Boston Braves," Garagiola said. "He is such a humble guy and so universally well-liked and respected."

White Sox Chairman Jerry Reinsdorf said: "Roland has dedicated himself for more than half a century to bettering the lives of those around him. He is a true inspiration."