



The Press-Sentinel

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Imagine Georgia, and the world, without Ted Turner and Hank Aaron

My Opinion



**DINK
NeSMITH**
Chairman

There they were—two American icons in Savannah. One was sitting on my left; the other on my right, both just

an arm's length away. Later, I listened to the accolades roll in like waves at nearby Tybee, I marveled at their accomplishments. But most of all, I was fascinated how different their journeys were to the same spot—honorees of the Georgia Historical Society.

Henry Louis Aaron was born on the poor side of Mobile in 1934. Four years later in Cincinnati, Robert Edward Turner III was born into privilege. Hank moved north, to Milwaukee. Ted came south, to Savannah. But fate placed both in Atlanta, where they found fame and fortune. There they became legends, tying a knot of friendship and loyalty that radiated as they praised each other during the ceremony.

Pointing to Ted, Hank said, "You're looking at a genius, someone who is two or three steps ahead of everyone else.



Photo by Richard Burkhart/Savannah Morning News

On the Savannah stage, the mood between the friends was playful. Pointing to Ted, Hank said, "You're looking at a genius, someone who is two or three steps ahead of everyone else. Back when he was starting CNN, he'd walk through the stadium and people thought he was crazy. Well, I'd like to be crazy like that."

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In 1752, His Majesty King George II of England appointed trustees to govern his new royal colony, Georgia. The guiding principle was *Non Sibi, Sed Aliis*—"Not for Self, but Others." Centuries later, the motto remains a noble challenge. Working in tandem, the governor's office and the Georgia Historical Society elected to revive trustee designation to honor citizens for their accomplishments and community service.

Saturday night, I was wearing my volunteer cap for The Nature Conservancy. As a guest of Turner Enterprises, Inc., I sat within the circle of excitement, listening to the banter of people who could each write a book about Ted and Hank.

Earlier, at a reception, I asked Hammerin' Hank about his entry into the Big League. Jackie Robinson opened the door, but Bobby Thompson gave him his big "break."

"In fact," he said and pointing, "Bobby's right over there."

In spring training, Bobby broke his ankle sliding into second base, giving a future Hall of Famer and home run king his lucky "break" to get called up from the minors. Then it hit me. I was standing with the man who broke Babe Ruth's home run record and the New York Giant who hit "the shot heard 'round world" in the 1951 pennant race to beat the Brooklyn Dodgers. And, I had no camera. Talk about whiffing one right over the plate.

After shaking their hands and my head, I walked over to the man who parlayed his father's failing billboard business into a global media and

entertainment giant. "Call me Ted," he said. He picked the topics for our discussion: conservation of land and elimination of nuclear weapons.

Famous for his unpredictable commentary, Ted lets his wallet follow his words—in a big way. With 2 million acres of protected properties, he's America's largest private landowner. He gave a billion dollars to the United Nations Foundation. He lobbied Warren Buffett to team his wealth with Bill and Melinda Gates' efforts to make life better for everyone, everywhere.

But as if he were talking about a newborn grandchild, Ted was giddy about the progress of his initiative with former U.S. Senator Nunn to stop the world from blowing itself up. I believe he's committed to using his last breath and last dollar to save us from ourselves.

Ted and Hank are different in so many ways. But, Georgia is lucky these legends call our state home. Their combined achievements would stack higher than Stone Mountain, but what they want to talk about most is their passion to make a difference. Their charitable foundations ensure Ted's and Hank's unselfish deeds will live longer than King George II ever imagined.

Here's to our new Georgia Trustees.

Non Sibi, Sed Aliis, indeed.
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