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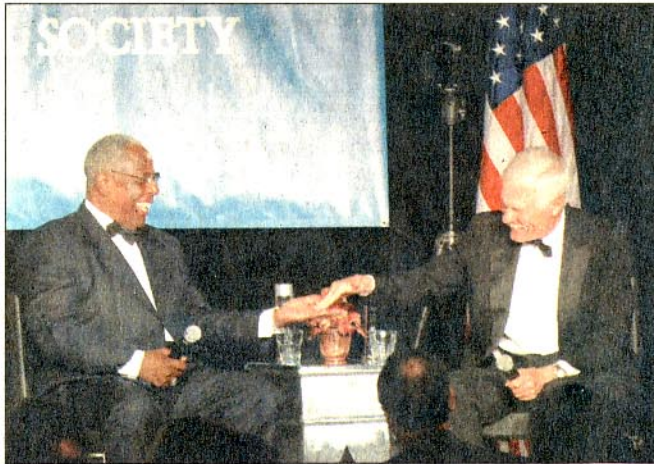
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COASTAL EMPIRE

Turner, Aaron honored at Georgia Historical Society gala

Hank Aaron and Ted Turner joke around on stage Saturday night as they are inducted as Georgia Trustees during the Georgia Historical Society Georgia Days Birthday Bash and Awards Gala at the Hyatt Regency Savannah.



Richard Burkhardt/Savannah Morning News

Georgia icons influenced each other as well as state

BY ADAM VAN BRIMMER

912-652-0362

adam.vanbrimmer@savannahnow.com

Ted Turner and Hank Aaron heavily influenced the last half-century of Georgia's history.

One couldn't have done it without the other, however.

How appropriate, then, that the two longtime friends and former co-workers were inducted together Saturday as Georgia Trustees at the Georgia Days Birthday Bash and Awards Gala.

"If it had not been for Ted, I don't know what I would have done," said Aaron, who called the then-Atlanta Braves owner for a job following his retirement from baseball. "When I look at heroes and people I worship, he has to be one of the men I admire most."

Turner said much the same about the Aaron. The Hall of Famer should be as admired for the classy way he's carried himself in life as he is for his baseball talents, Turner said.

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Gala

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Both admitted the only honor greater than being named a Georgia Trustee — the original trustees were appointed by England's King George II in 1732 to establish the colony of Georgia — was being inducted on the same night.

Turner and Aaron's relationship made for an entertaining evening at the Georgia Historical Society's annual fundraiser in the Hyatt Regency ballroom. U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson introduced the two and presented them with their awards.

"There can be no better role model than Hank Aaron," Isakson said. "As for Captain Outrageous, he put Georgia on the map."

Both honorees gave short speeches, with Aaron thanking the Georgia Historical Society for "connecting my life's work with the founding idea for Georgia — not for self but for others."

Aaron and Turner later sat down together for a sometimes touching, sometimes humorous question-and-answer session. Topics ranged from their personal inspirations and success secrets to proudest accomplishments and philanthropic ideals. Highlights included:

- Aaron on what he wants to be remembered for: "Not for the home runs I hit; they're insignificant. I want people to remember that somewhere I helped some child reach his potential or his dream."

- Turner's one-line secret to success: "Early to bed, early to rise, work like hell and advertise."

Aaron and Turner's admiration for each other was clearly the theme of the evening. Turner hired Aaron to run the Braves' farm system in 1980, a job Aaron did so well he eventually ascended to a senior vice president's position.

They share what Turner listed as his three most prominent personality traits: "hard work, enthusiasm and infectious enthusiasm."

Each channeled those ideals

into projects. Aaron became a successful businessman, starting a string of car dealerships and sitting on the board of directors of several Georgia companies. His charity work includes contributions to the Boys and Girls Clubs of America and the Carter Center. He and his wife, Billye, founded the Hank Aaron Chasing a Dream Foundation.

Turner, meanwhile, parlayed his family's billboard advertising business into a media conglomerate. He launched CNN in 1980, revolutionizing the news industry and cable television.

He's used his fortune to fund a multitude of philanthropic endeavors, ranging from the environment to nuclear disarmament. He donated \$1 billion to the United Nations.

"You're looking at a genius, someone who is two or three steps ahead of everyone else," Aaron told the crowd, pointing at Turner. "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."