

## ABF Lead Off Dinner Speaker History



Tommy Lasorda, baseball ambassador, ex manager Los Angeles Dodgers for 22 years in which his teams won four National League pennants and two World Series titles was the featured speaker at the inaugural ABF Lead Off Dinner. Tommy was named National League Manager of the Year in 1983 and 1988. Tommy also lead the USA National Team to a gold medal at the 2000 Summer Olympiad in Sydney, Australia. Known for his generosity toward others, Tommy donated his time to the ABF in its inaugural event on February 9<sup>th</sup>,

2002. Tommy's words to live by: "God delays but does not deny".

Holder of twelve Major League records including most games, most at bats, total bases and runs batted in, Hank Aaron spoke at the second ABF Lead Off Dinner on February 13, 2003. A Mobile, Alabama native whose life is part of the ABF BASIC curriculum, Hank overcame obstacles during his career to become one of the greatest players ever to wear an MLB uniform. Hank's message directed to Central Alabama youth was to focus on the task at hand, both on the athletic field and in the classroom. This is similar to the ABF's message in BASIC.

Hank shares a memory with  
ABF board member  
Jeffery R. Dugas, M.D.



The only player to win the Rookie of the Year, Most Valuable Player and the Cy Young Award in the history of professional baseball, Don "Newk" Newcombe was one of the first African American players to cross the color line in 1949. As a pitcher, Newk won 149 games over a 10-season career with a .623 winning percentage. Don also places ninth on the all-time pitchers' batting list boasting a lifetime .271 batting average. Newk entertained the local fans with his stories of his first years in the "biggs" and his post-baseball life of spreading positive values as a Los Angeles Dodger featured speaker. Don's life is also part of the ABF BASIC program.

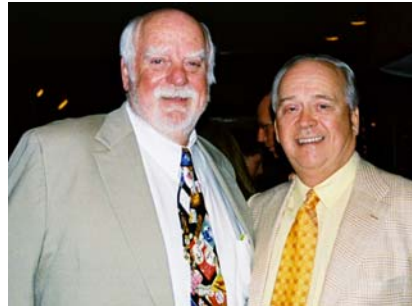




On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005 the ABF featured two dynamic pitchers as speakers for its 4<sup>th</sup> annual event. Chicago Cubs ace Mark Prior shared the podium with Tom House, ex Atlanta Braves, Boston Red Sox and Seattle Mariners pitcher. House led off with his mother's oft-repeated axiom, "No "A", no play". Prior stressed his education that includes a degree in economics from University of Southern California where he was the second pick in the 2001 baseball draft. He noted that his degree exists as his building block for a future beyond baseball.

Mark and Heather Prior

Hall of Fame great Gaylord Perry entertained the audience at the ABF's 5<sup>th</sup> Lead Off Dinner held on January 26, 2006. Perry a veteran of 22 MLB seasons in which he won two Cy Young Awards pitched 5350 big league innings. Perry and his brother Jim hold the second highest number of MLB wins for a brother combination at 529. A native of North Carolina, Gaylord thrilled the audience with his stories of a small-town boy made good on a national stage.



Gaylord pictured with ABF board chairman, James R. Andrews, M.D.

San Francisco great, Will Clark spoke at the 6<sup>th</sup> event on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Will a graduate of Mississippi State University and a native of Louisiana, began his talk with a story about Birmingham great Bo Jackson, who barreled into Will on his first at bat against the Giants. Bo who attended the event to recognize Dr. Andrews with the ABF Leadership Award, noted that he hadn't tried to hurt the rookie. Will "The Thrill" recounted many stories of his fifteen year career in which he batted a lifetime .303 and was named to the all-star team six times.



Clark flanked by ABF

supporters John and Jack Odle



Atlanta Braves great John Smoltz graced Birmingham with his strong message to area youth at the 7<sup>th</sup> Lead Off Dinner held on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008. John a future Hall of Fame inductee based on his remarkable competitive career at a starting and then a closing MLB pitcher dating back to 1988. A 1996 Cy Young Award winner and known for his great post-season winning percentage, John exhorted Birmingham enthusiasts to “follow your dream, even though others are skeptical”. He summarized his life philosophy saying, “I would love to leave a legacy with my children to know that God had a hand in my life, to know that HE changed me from a decent person to a God-fearing, loving person, and that servant mindset, humility, thinks of others before himself.”

Author of two books designed to educate the professional and amateur sporting public, Atlanta Braves great Dale Murphy entertained an adoring public on January 29, 2009 with a combination of stories from his playing days in which he was the most exciting Braves player for fifteen seasons during which he collected awards for his hitting and fielding prowess. During his peak career years, 1982-1987, Murphy was widely considered the best all-around player in MLB. Dale, husband of Nancy and father of seven boys and one girl, heads the “I Won’t Cheat Foundation” that promulgates vital values for America’s youth. The Foundation values are the same one that are taught in the ABF BASIC program.

Dale poses with Yankee great Oscar Gamble

