

**BASEBALL**

# Jim Hickman, Slugger for Expansion Mets and All-Star with Cubs, Dies at 79

By RICHARD GOLDSTEIN JUNE 26, 2016

Jim Hickman, who supplied batting punch for the Mets during their futile early years and then became an All-Star for the Chicago Cubs, died on Saturday in Jackson, Tenn. He was 79.

His death was confirmed by his son Mike, who did not specify the cause.

Hickman, a lanky right-handed batter, played in the outfield and at first and third base in a 13-year major league career. In his years with the Mets, from 1962 to 1966, first at the Polo Grounds and then at Shea Stadium, he set several team milestones.

He was the first Met to hit three home runs in a single game and the first to hit for the cycle — a single, double, triple and homer in one game. (He did it in that order.) He was also the last Met to hit a home run at the Polo Grounds, connecting off the Philadelphia Phillies' Chris Short on Sept. 18, 1963.

Taking advantage of the Polo Grounds' short left-field line, Hickman hit 30 home runs for Casey Stengel's Mets in their first two seasons, when they lost a total of 231 games. His most memorable one came on Aug. 9, 1963, two days after he hit for the cycle against the St. Louis Cardinals, when his grand slam in the ninth inning off the Cubs' Lindy McDaniel gave the Mets a 7-3 victory that ended pitcher Roger Craig's stretch of 18 consecutive losses.

Hickman was traded to the Dodgers in November 1966. He was the last Met remaining from the expansion draft that stocked the team's inaugural roster.

Dealt to the Cubs after one year in Los Angeles, Hickman was platooned for a while, then flourished at the plate after the Cubs' manager, Leo Durocher, made him a regular late in the 1969 season.

He hit 21 homers for the 1969 Cubs, who were overtaken by the long-downtrodden Mets in their startling run to a World Series championship. The next year he hit 32 home runs, drove in 115 runs, batted .315 and was No. 8 in the balloting for the National League's most valuable player. He was also an All-Star that year for the only time in his career.

Hickman became a footnote to a notorious moment in All-Star Game history when he delivered a 12th-inning single at the 1970 game in Cincinnati, driving in Pete Rose with the winning run. Rose scored when he barreled into the American League catcher, Ray Fosse, instead of sliding, and severely injured Fosse's shoulder.

Drawing a stark contrast between Hickman and many of his teammates after he drove in the winning run in a victory over the Dodgers in June 1970, Durocher remarked, "He gives you not 100 but 150 percent on the field, and some of those guys should be kissing his feet."

Hickman in turn praised Durocher. "Leo saved me," he told [chicagobaseballmuseum.org](http://chicagobaseballmuseum.org) in a 2014 interview. "I was just a part-time player. He gave me a real good chance to play. After I had a little success, I felt he had a little confidence in me, and that helped me."

James Lucius Hickman was born in Henning, Tenn., on May 10, 1937. He signed with the Cardinals' organization in 1956 and played in their minor league system until he joined the Mets.

Having missed three months of the 1966 season with a wrist injury, Hickman was traded to the Dodgers along with Ron Hunt, the Mets' star second baseman,

for Tommy Davis, a two-time N.L. batting champion.

Hickman played five seasons with the Mets, one with the Dodgers, six with the Cubs and a final year with the Cardinals. He retired after the 1974 season with a .252 career batting average and 159 home runs.

In addition to his son Mike, he is survived by three other sons, Jim Jr., Bill and Joey, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. His wife, Juanita, died in 2012.

Hickman, who lived in Henning, ran a farm after his retirement from baseball and then became a batting instructor for the Cincinnati Reds' minor league system.

"I tell them I was 32 before I learned to hit," he was quoted by George Castle in the 2005 book "Where Have All Our Cubs Gone?" "When a kid's struggling, I'll use that example."

### ***Correction: June 28, 2016***

An obituary on Monday about Jim Hickman, who played for the Mets in their early years, erroneously attributed a distinction to him. Rod Kanehl, not Hickman, was the first Met to hit a grand slam. The error was repeated in a subheading.

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