

Harwell's hometown will honor him February 15 just before induction into Ga. Sports Hall of Fame

WASHINGTON, GA – Extensive planning is underway for an event that will honor one of Washington's famous native sons for a lifetime of achievement and will also provide ongoing scholarships for students pursuing careers in his chosen profession.

In conjunction with his induction into the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame next month, baseball broadcaster Ernie Harwell will be honored in his hometown at an upscale event which promises not only to recognize him as one of the all-time great announcers, but also to bring a lot of attention and celebrities to his boyhood home.

A number of sports celebrities are expected to attend and already confirmed to be a part of the program are Furman Bisher, Pete Van Wiren, and Loran Smith. Attendees will be treated to a menu of hotdogs, popcorn, peanuts, and Cracker Jack in keeping with the baseball theme and an auction of baseball items will include merchandise and memorabilia donated by the Atlanta Braves and Detroit Tigers.

Proceeds from the event will be used to endow at least one scholarship for a local broadcast journalism major and to establish the annual "Ernie Harwell MVP Award" for a Washington-Wilkes Tiger baseball player.

Sales of tables to corporate sponsors have already begun and all available seats are expected to go quickly. Various levels of participation are available with incentives including autographed books and special photographs. Anyone interested in purchasing a "table" is encouraged to call Ashley Barnett at 706-678-2013, Jim Roberts at 706-678-2448, or Sparky Newsome at 706-678-2636.

Harwell was born in Washington in 1918 and began his sports announcing career with the Atlanta Crackers in 1943. He is the only announcer in baseball history to be traded for a player when he was hired by the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1948. He is most famous for having been the "voice" of the Detroit Tigers for almost 42 years, beginning in 1960 and ending with his retirement in 2002.

Many of Harwell's calls are legendary and his broadcasts also include two All-Star games and two World Series, nationally for NBC Radio, as well as the 1984 World Series for the Tigers and WJR in Detroit.

In addition, Harwell has written a number of songs and eight books about his years in baseball. A devout Christian, he is involved with the Baseball Chapel, an evangelical organization for professional baseball players.

The Washington event to honor Harwell will be held at The Pope Center on Friday, February 15, the day before his induction into the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame in Atlanta.

(Photos courtesy of the R.M. Willingham Jr. collection.)