

# Y A W K E Y F O U N D A T I O N S

We are deeply disappointed that Red Sox and *Boston Globe* owner John Henry has petitioned the city's Public Improvement Commission to rename Yawkey Way, an action based on a false narrative about Tom Yawkey and his record as the team's owner.

Henry asserts Tom Yawkey's name should be expunged forever from outside Fenway Park because he is "haunted" by the fact that the Red Sox were the last Major League team to integrate, in 1959. But as Henry well knows, this is far from the whole story. He need only look at the *Globe's* archives to see that the team under Tom Yawkey sought to acquire and promote black ballplayers throughout the 1950s.

Henry is seeking to take the drastic action of renaming the street that has borne Yawkey's name for more than 40 years without any apparent consideration of these facts. Worse, he fails to take into account the entirety of Tom Yawkey's life and his generosity to the city he loved. His efforts saved the Jimmy Fund, one of Boston's most enduring charities, and the foundations established by him and his wife, Jean, will ensure that there will be funding to help those in need for future generations.

Former Red Sox ballplayers and club officials who knew Tom Yawkey have stated many times that he treated every player the same, regardless of their race. He also took an interest in their families and personal lives, and always gave them the support they needed, especially during difficult times. And he fielded diverse teams during the 1960s and 1970s, at a time when many of Boston's institutions had yet to make meaningful progress in hiring minorities. The full picture of Tom Yawkey's life is exactly the opposite of the one that Henry has tried to paint.

Tom Yawkey's name is now honored throughout Boston; dozens of organizations – among the beneficiaries of the more than \$300 million the Yawkey Foundations have donated to charities in the city - have proudly put the Yawkey name on buildings and facilities made possible by the grants they have received.

Keenly aware of this unparalleled legacy of giving, Henry has praised the Foundations and said their good works should be considered apart from his call to rename Yawkey Way. But the name of the street is synonymous with the name of the Foundations. To tarnish Tom Yawkey's name by removing it from outside Fenway Park is to tarnish it everywhere.

As he proceeds with his misguided effort to rename Yawkey Way, it is important to know that Henry showed no reluctance to associate the Red Sox with Tom Yawkey when the team, in 2012, sought to place Fenway Park on the U.S. Park Service's National Register of Historic Places.

Indeed, the team's application highlighted Yawkey's long tenure as owner, noting, "Thomas Yawkey . . . is credited with rebuilding the team as well as the ballpark. He was active until his death in 1976, at which time Jersey Street, upon which the main façade of the ballpark faces, was renamed Yawkey Way in his honor." In describing the ballpark's unique characteristics, the application states ". . . the initials of Thomas A. Yawkey and Jean R. Yawkey were written in Morse code along the side of the scoreboard."

Clearly, Tom Yawkey's achievements during his historic 43-year ownership of the Red Sox were integral to Henry's success in obtaining the designation, and a similar one from the Massachusetts Historical Commission, which has resulted in more than \$80 million in state and federal tax credits for the Red Sox. There was no hint in the applications for the designations that Yawkey Way would not remain as a testament to Yawkey's stewardship of the team and the ballpark itself.

In reviewing a petition to change the name of a street, the Public Improvements Commission is not a rubber stamp, but has the power to examine "legitimate concerns" raised by a proposed name change, in addition to how it might affect historic preservation.

We urge the commission to consider all the facts concerning Tom Yawkey's ownership of the Red Sox and the sweep of his life, and recognize that although Yawkey Way is a public street owned by the city, it has become as much a part of the history of Fenway Park as the Green Monster and Pesky's Pole. We are confident that if it does so, it will reject Henry's petition.

-----

*\*To learn more about Tom Yawkey's life and his record as the owner of the Red Sox, please visit:*  
<http://yawkeyfoundation.org/strs.html>