

# Pirates remember Stargell's heroics

PITTSBURGH — A day of celebration for the Pittsburgh Pirates became a rite of sadness Monday as they mourned the death of Hall of Famer Willie Stargell on the very day they moved into PNC Park.

As fans streamed across the Roberto Clemente Bridge for the first opening day at the riverside ballpark, many crowded around a bronze statue of Stargell that was unveiled only Saturday.

The 12-foot statue, as imposing as Stargell was to opposing pitchers, became a touchstone for thousands who needed a moment to stare, to reflect, to remember the player known as "Pops."

Some brought flowers, others cried. Some fans left behind signs such as, "We Love You, Pops No. 8" — and, no doubt, a memory or two of the player who had starred, and taught others how to star, on the Pirates' last two World Series championship teams.

A moment of silence turned into a lengthy salute as fans kept applauding and applauding long after a pre-game video tribute to Stargell ended. It was almost as if they wouldn't let the game go on without the greatest home-run hitter in the franchise's 115 seasons.

"Win One for Pops," read one sign; another read, "It's a Sad Day

— There's been a death in the Family," a reference to the "We Are Family" 1979 Pirates.

Reds coach Ken Griffey, who opposed Stargell in innumerable important Reds-Pirates games in the 1970s, could be seen wiping a tear from his eye. Cincinnati first baseman Sean Casey, a Pittsburgh native who estimates he saw 15-20 games a year in Three Rivers as a youth, also seemed visibly moved.

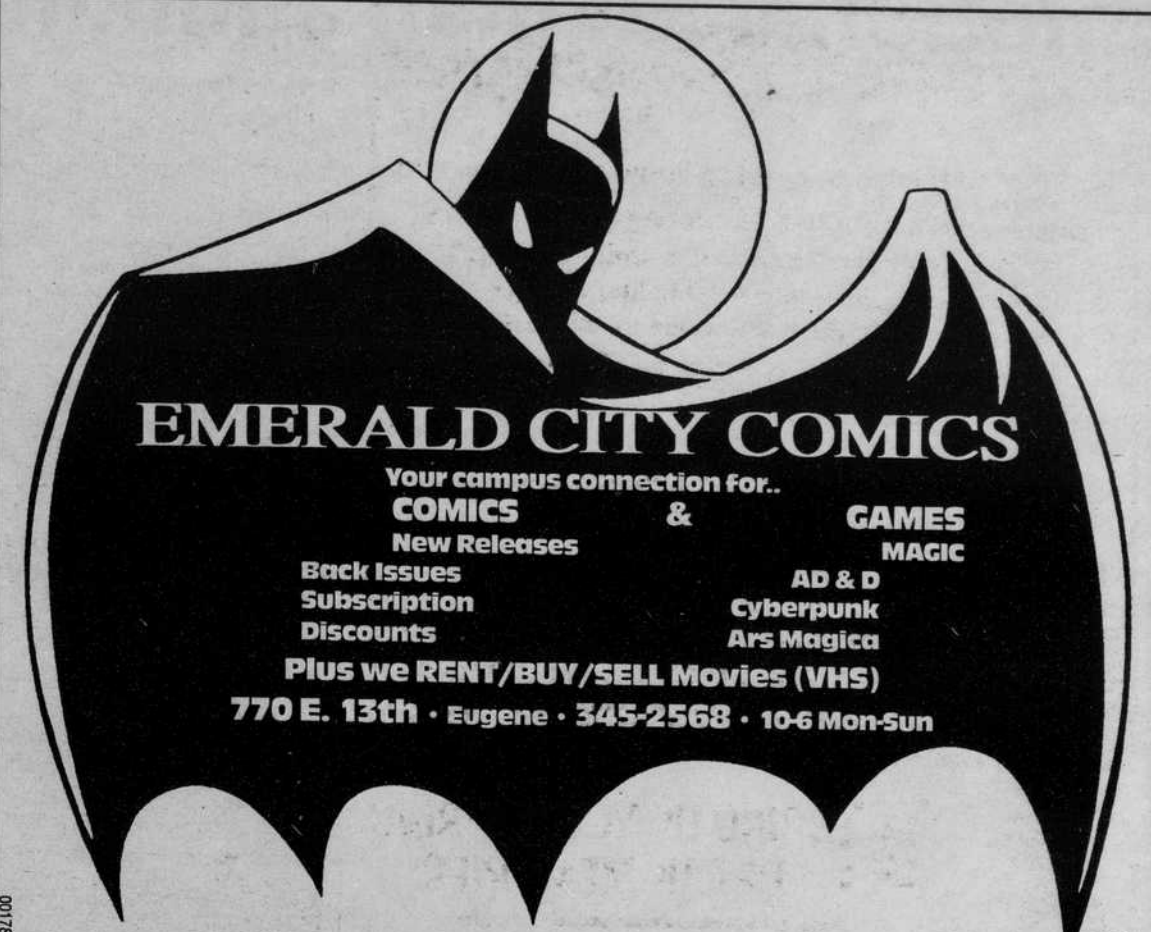
A few minutes later, Casey got the first hit — and first homer — in PNC Park, a two-run shot in the first inning off Todd Ritchie.

Ritchie, like the other Pirates, wore a No. 8 on his cap in Stargell's honor, and the team will wear a Stargell uniform patch the rest of the season.

Chuck Tanner, Stargell's manager from 1977-82, felt a twinge of disbelief that the player who benefited most from the Pirates' 1970 move from Forbes Field to Three Rivers Stadium died on the very day a new park opened.

Stargell's power, muted by the impossibly deep fences in Forbes, exploded in Three Rivers. He became baseball's most prolific home-run hitter as the Pirates won six division titles and two World Series during the 1970s.

The Associated Press



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### Time for the weekly sports poll!

Last week, we asked which 2001 Oregon football game would be the most important. 33.3 percent of our loyal Internet clickers said the Sept. 1 kickoff game against Wisconsin would be the one. 4.8 percent thought the Ducks' road test at Arizona would be the toughest. But those games will be walks in the park, you said, compared to the Dec. 1 matchup with the hated Oregon State Beavers. 61.9 percent of those who voted thought the nationally televised in-state matchup would be the most important game of Oregon's season.

This week, we focus your attention on the world of golf, in honor of the recently concluded Masters tournament. We ask which golfer is the greatest of all time: Bobby Jones, Jack "Golden Bear" Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer or Tiger Woods, who completed his own grand slam by winning the Masters this year?

Give us your opinion by going online to [www.dailymerald.com](http://www.dailymerald.com), clicking the "sports" link and voting in the poll today.

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