

# Chicken Tidbits

★ The Famous San Diego Chicken's first ballgame was the Padres' Opening Night, April 9, 1974—the night after Hank Aaron broke Babe Ruth's historic home run record.

★ His first show on the road was for the St. Louis Cardinals at Busch Stadium, August, 1976. The Cardinal players, big fans of The Chicken in their San Diego visits, personally pooled their kangaroo court money, made the arrangements and flew him out to a pair of their home games.

★ His first minor league baseball appearance was August, 1978 for the El Paso Diablos, promoted by legendary General Manager Jim Paul. The game drew a record crowd and launched The Chicken as a national box office attraction.

★ As owner of the Atlanta Braves, Ted Turner offered a player trade with the San Diego Padres for The Chicken, Ted Giannoulas. When the Padres informed him they didn't own his rights (a radio station did), he tried to sign Giannoulas outright a year later.

★ In his storied career, The Chicken has performed his shows in every major North American city except Boston. He's toured New England extensively, but never gotten the call from a Beantown team or school.

★ Born and raised in London, Canada, Ted immigrated to San Diego as a teen with his family. He attended Hoover High, the same school which also graduated baseball great Ted Williams.

★ While working for a radio station in the 70s, it was Ted Giannoulas who introduced recorded rock music to sports events for his Chicken skits. Today, "stadium rock" is taken for granted since The Chicken pioneered the idea.

★ One of the San Diego Chicken's heads sits in the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library in Grand Rapids, Michigan. During the '76 campaign, a national political reporter loved The Chicken's antics at a Ford rally enough to ask him for the headpiece to wear at the next press conference as a gag. Upon doing so, it amused President Ford to then request the item for his archives.

★ The Chicken made his film debut in the cult classic, *Attack Of The Killer Tomatoes*. Affectionately known as the worst movie ever made, he was offered the starring role, but due to his tight schedule, he could only allow time for a featured cameo spot in the climactic ending. As the conquering hero, he leads the citizenry in hand to hand combat against the invasion of real tomatoes swarming into town.

★ The Chicken made baseball card history in the 80s when the Donruss company included him in the actual players' sets with his own card for several seasons. Hailed by hobbyists, it was the first time a fan character had been a part of any collection. Years later, Upper Deck also featured him on a Cecil Fielder card engaged in a comedic routine.

★ The Chicken's Favorite Mascot: "The Florida U Gator always makes me laugh. He can lip sync the national anthem and his orange sweater brings out a lighter side to his game face. A funny moment was when sideline TV cameras showed him gesturing wildly and mimicking trash talk, while Mrs. Gator patiently tried to calm his outrage."

★ For five seasons, The Chicken starred with Johnny Bench on the TV show, *The Baseball Bunch*. The critically acclaimed program won three Emmy Awards.

