

Since 1972

The PRESS

April 17, 2017

FREE

Serving More Than 33,000 Homes & Businesses in 4 Counties

20 THE PRESS APRIL 17, 2017

Mike Hessman song chronicles storied 20-year career

Retired slugger Mike Hessman is the subject of a new song by Boston-area singer-songwriter Howie Newman and is included on his most recent album, *When You're Happy*. Titled "The Ballad of Mike Hessman (Minor League Home Run King)," it chronicles Hessman's 20-year baseball career that began in 1996.

Hessman played for the Toledo Mud Hens from 2005-2009, and also in 2014 and 2015.

Now a hitting coach for the West Michigan Whitecaps of the Class A Midwest League, Hessman set the career minor league record for home runs with 433. He played 19 seasons in the minors, breaking the previous home run record of 432, set by Buzz Arlett in 1936.

The Mud Hens jersey Hessman wore when hitting homer No. 433 – a grand slam against the Lehigh Valley IronPigs on Aug. 3, 2015 – now hangs in the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

Hessman, who also played professional ball in Japan, Venezuela and Mexico, was a member of 17 different teams in his 20-year career. He also represented Team USA at the 2008



Mike Hessman. (Press file photo by Scott Grau courtesy Toledo Mud Hens)

Beijing Olympics and, fittingly enough, hit a home run.

"I read about Mike in Sports Illustrated and thought it was a very interesting story," said Newman, who has penned 11 other baseball songs among the 100 or so that he has written. "Here was a guy who must have really loved the game to have stayed with it that long and persevered through all the moving around and changing teams.

"The irony, of course, is that 433 home runs is a tremendous feat but it came at the expense of his ultimate goal, which was to have a long major league career."

Hessman, 39, did play parts of five seasons in the majors, logging 109 games with the Braves, Mets



Singer/songwriter Howie Newman.

and Tigers. He batted .188 with 14 home runs, 33 RBIs and 79 strikeouts in 250 at-bats.

About the song

"The Ballad of Mike Hessman" is a country-rock tune, featuring Newman on acoustic guitar along with lead and backup vocals.

The track also includes some nifty keyboard work by Tim Ray, a longtime piano player for Lyle Lovett who has performed with Aretha Franklin and Bonnie Raitt.

In the song, Newman notes that Hessman "just kept playing 'cause he loved it" but adds "becoming minor league home run king was a blessing and a curse."

The 10-track album, "When You're Happy," is available through

www.howinewman.com.

Individual mp3s of "The Ballad of Mike Hessman" can be purchased from iTunes, Amazon and other digital music outlets.

About Howie Newman

Newman is a full-time musician and a full-time baseball fan who has been to 88 major and minor league parks.

He was sportswriter for 18 years, working for the Boston Globe, Associated Press, Patriot Ledger (Quincy, Mass.), Lowell (Mass.) Sun and several other suburban newspapers.

Newman covered the World Series in 1985 and 1986.

He has combined his love of baseball with music, having produced two CDs of baseball songs, *Baseball's Greatest Hits, Volumes 1 and 2*. Both albums have been accepted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame Archive in Cooperstown, N.Y.

His label is Major League Records and his publishing company is Chin Music (BMI).

Newman's baseball compositions include songs about Mario Mendoza, Doug Mientkiewicz, Tug McGraw and Bob Heise.

He performs in a folk-rock duo called Knock on Wood that plays concerts all over the New England area.