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# The Tall Mexican: The Life Of Hank Aguirre All-Star Pitcher, Businessman, Humanitarian



## Synopsis

Growing up, Hank Aguirre rose every morning long before school to make and deliver tortillas as part of a small family business. In his free time, the teen-aged Hank played Legion baseball and in neighborhood pick-up games. After graduation, he signed on with the Cleveland Indians organization. Hank Aguirre enjoyed a successful, award-winning major-league career as a pitcher. Then, instead of basking in his popularity, he went on to found Mexican Industries in the burned-out heart of crime-ridden urban Detroit. His firm gave employment to more than a thousand people, bringing hope where there had once been only despair. This was a man who pushed beyond mere celebrity to become a true hero.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 7 Up-Whereas Aguirre may be best known for his outstanding professional baseball career, Copley devotes at least an equal amount of text to his subject's career as entrepreneur, businessman, and provider of employment opportunities for thousands of his fellow Hispanics through his establishment of Mexican Industries. According to the author, Aguirre developed his work ethic growing up in California in a large Mexican-American family. As teenagers, he and his brother Fred got up before 5:00 a.m. daily to make and box a thousand corn tortillas for the family business. However, every spare moment was spent honing the pitching skills that served him throughout his successful 18-year baseball career that included stints as mediator, coach, and manager. Myriad reminiscences from friends, family, employees, colleagues, and fellow athletes

provide readers with the sense of true admiration felt for the subject. Whereas readers may relate more to the baseball era of Aguirre's life, it is the saga of Mexican Industries that is truly a rags-to-riches story. Copley knew Aguirre well and reveals his foibles as well as his attributes in this well-balanced biography. Sylvia V. Meisner, Allen Middle School, Greensboro, NC Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Gr. 6<sup>^</sup>-12. A descendant of conquistadores and the son of a dogmatic businessman, Hank Aguirre seemed earmarked for success, despite his impoverished childhood. Undeterred by having to make and package thousands of tortillas each morning for his father's customers, Aguirre found the energy to excel in school and perfect his pitching arm enough to be accepted into college and, eventually, the big leagues. His greater mission in life, however, was not as a pitcher but as an entrepreneur, and his Mexican Industries became a multimillion-dollar operation providing opportunities for minorities nationwide. As a personal friend of Aguirre, Copley is privy to fascinating details about him that raise this biography above standard fare. Descriptions of the subject's childhood are rich in detail, and the baseball highlights not only give a vivid sense of the game during the 1960s but also include personal anecdotes from legends such as Leo Durocher and Mickey Lolich. Meticulous, humble, and ethical, Aguirre proves a most worthy biographical subject and inspiring hero. Roger Leslie

One of my memories of Hank Aguirre is his pitching in relief of the first major league game I saw in Detroit in 1958. After completing a game in Yankee Stadium in which Al Kaline broke his collar bone to make a diving catch to win the game the headline read "Tigers Find A Starter But Lose A Star", the Tigers found they had a legitimate starting pitcher for their staff. Hank's inability as a hitter are legendary, but the author spends a great deal of time on Hank's humanitarian efforts on behalf of Hispanic minorities in the Detroit area. His business efforts were ultimately successful, but the time spent away from his family took its toll. People are remembered for what they give, and Hank gave of himself to others. This is a very easy to read book, and one that would be beneficial to high school libraries even though the name of Hank Aguirre is an unknown to them.

hank aguirre, an all-star big-league pitcher and a Hispanic wanted to give back to his people, started a business in the Hispanic barrio of Detroit. He opened his business with 8 employees all of whom are Hispanic used his home to borrow money to finance the business in 1979. Today the company known as Mexican Industries has 1500 employees. 87% of whom are Hispanic. Sales this year will

reach \$165 million. The payroll in the plants in Detroit alone will reach \$35 million. Hank died of prostate cancer in 1994; but his legacy lives on. All is described in his biography. The Tall Mexican will be inspirational to all Hispanics who feel their success will be buried in racial injustice. Reviews have been extremely favorable.

an inspiring account of The Tall Mexican, Hank Aguirre, who was a true professional baseball star; but who dedicated his post-celebrity life to helping his fellow Hispanics in Detroit by starting a business and providing jobs for the unemployable. He started his business in 1979 with eight employees and one run-down former bump-shop in the Mexicantown barrio. Today, there are eight locations employing over 1500 workers - 87% of whom are Hispanic. Sales this year are projected at \$156 million. Hank succumbed to prostate cancer in 1994, but his legacy prevails.

the tall mexican is heart-lifting biography of a big-league, all-star pitcher who broke the mold of professional athletes by starting a business in crime-ridden section of Detroit and providing jobs for the jobless and hope for the hopeless and turned thousands of lives around in so doing. A deeply spiritual man, hank aguirre befriended many and exploited no one

Bob Copley paints a vivid and moving picture of a man who showed us all how to be better human beings. Hank Aguirre was no more perfect than the rest of us, and that made him the perfect role model for real people. He had talent and determination and compassion and he parlayed those qualities for the benefit of those less fortunate than himself. Aguirre showed us all how to be better managers and better citizens and better friends. Copley's biography brings us into the world of Hank Aguirre and allows us to experience life as a friend, neighbor, and colleague of Aguirre. And as such, in the end, we grieve Hank's untimely passing with the same sadness. Hank's legacy lives on, through his family and through all of us who are willing to share our blessings and opportunities with others. The Tall Mexican lets Hank Aguirre continue to provide a powerful role model for generations to come. Share it with your children.

i was fascinated by the title itself. the tall mexican should be a must read for all minorities who struggle under the lash of prejudice. i thought i was going to read a story about baseball, but discovered TTM is a story of hope and of love for our fellowman that goes beyond the ordinary into the realm of the spiritual. Hank Aguirre was, pure and simple, a giant of a man whose work for other Hispanics made him an apostle for the underprivileged -

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