



Members of the Polish Falcons' Alliance of America during a baseball show game at a field in Wisła, Cracow, 1925. Photo: National Digital Archives

## BIOGRAM / BIOGRAFIA

# „Stan the Man.” A baseball player with Poland in his heart

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Although today the Polish Falcons' Alliance of America is mainly associated with patriotic activities and initiatives for the military, we need to remember its engagement in promoting physical exercise in the Polish diaspora was of great importance as well.

Stanley Frank Musial, “Stan the Man”, was actually called Stanisław Franciszek Musiał. He was born on November 21, 1920 in Donora, Pennsylvania. He was one of the most famous and successful baseball players of all time. Performing for the St. Louis Cardinals in the National League as the first baseman and outfielder

for 22 seasons, he was inducted in the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1969.

### **Active member of the Polish Falcons**

Stanley Musial was the fifth of six children of Polish immigrant Łukasz Musiał and Mary née Lancos of Czech origin. He began his training with gymnastic exercises at the Center no. 247 of the Polish Falcons' Alliance of America in Donora. His father signed him up for the classes in 1934, although "Stan the Man" himself later said that he had attended them before:

"Three times a week, before I was nine or ten years old, we were going to the Falcons. [...] We marched and trained military drills, and then we exercised on machines and mats. We swung on gymnastic handrails, jumped over the >>horse<< and performed acrobatic exercises, which helped me avoid any injuries in my professional career. In the spring, our instructors took us outside to compete in athletic tournaments against other cities. I have no words to describe how much these three years of gymnastics with the Falcons have given me."

In September, 1967 he was honoured with a lifetime membership of the Polish Falcons' Alliance of America during a banquet on the organisation's 80th anniversary. Until 2004, he was a full-fledged member of the Falcons' centre in Donora, paying membership fees and all. Whenever he could, he attended the honorary banquets and meetings organised by the Falcons. During those, he often praised the organisation's sport program and emphasised the importance of attending the Falcons' classes as a young man and the impact it had on his career.



**Stanley Musial, a photograph with an autograph for the 141 Centre in Cleveland. Photo: Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance**

## **Baseball legend**

He started his career when he was barely 17 years old, when he signed his first contract with the St. Louis Cardinals. He turned pro a year later as a left-handed pitcher. Despite a serious injury in 1940, the next year brought him a debut in Major League Baseball. Since that point forward, his career took off with a short break during the war, when he joined the US Navy. After finishing his service in 1946, he played for the Cardinals for the next 17 years, where he gained the nickname “Stan the Man.”

Until the end of his career, Musial played 3,026 games in total, including 24 All-Star games. He got three MVP titles, scored 3,630 hits, hit 475 home runs and won the World Series three times (1942, 1944, 1946).

In 1940, he married Lilian Susan Labash with whom he had four children (a son and three daughters). When he retired from baseball, he launched a business and worked as the general manager of the Cardinals. He also worked as a physical condition consultant for US president Lyndon Johnson (1964-1967). In 1969, he was inducted in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. He was the first sportsman to be included in the National Polish-American Sports Hall of Fame in Orchard Lake, near Detroit (1973). In 2011, president Barack Obama handed him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award in the United States.



**Stan Musial during a banquet on the 80th anniversary of the Polish Falcons' Alliance of America, 1967. Photo: Archives of the Institute of National**

## Remembrance



**Stan Musial with members of the Falcons. Photo: Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance**

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He is remembered as a sympathetic man who enjoyed meeting his fans. He was very open, believed in racial equality and was never sent off the field for inappropriate conduct. He always had his harmonica with him, on which he used to play *Take Me Out to the Ball Game*, the unofficial baseball fan anthem.

Musial never hid his Polish origins and was always proud of them. He supported the Polish-American diaspora. He visited Poland four times (1987, 1996, 1997, 2000). He was the honorary citizen of Kutno. He is attributed with the introduction of baseball to Poland and promoting the sport in our country.

Stanley Musial passed away on January 19, 2013 in Laude, Missouri. He was 92 years old.



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**Stan Musial with his wife Lilian  
Susan and Ed Pet. Photo:  
Archives of the Institute of  
National Remembrance**



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**Walter Laska and Stan Musial in  
the middle. Photo: Archives of  
the Institute of National  
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