



Curley Culp's Enshrinement Speech
August 3, 2013

Curley Culp

Good evening. I tell you, this is quite something. Thank you, Chad. You know, Chad is the bonus baby. Thank you so much. My first child, Christopher was called the “Bumptie baby”, and Chad was the “Bonus baby”. I know they're cringing right now, but it's okay. It's an inside family joke.

Greetings to the [Hall of Fame](#), President [Steve Perry](#) and his lovely wife, Sondra, members of the Hall of Fame selection committee—especially John McClain of the [Houston Chronicle](#), and Rick Gosselin of the [Dallas Morning News](#)—NFL commissioner, [Roger Goodell](#) and other invited guests and dignitaries. You know, this is an occasion that has long been in my dreams and now lives in reality. I cannot express how glorious a feeling this is for me and my family who have long hoped with me that this day would come. To be enshrined into the Pro Football Hall of Fame gives me joy and inspiration that will last the rest of my life. I must begin my remarks by acknowledging and thanking my lovely wife Collette, who has waited with me patiently all these years for this day to come. She will always be the love of my life. Thank you, sweetheart, for all that you do. Again, to my sons, Chad William and Christopher Rian, you guys keep me on my toes and keep me feeling rather young. Yes, I love you both with all my heart. To my granddaughters, Neveah and Aleira, and grandsons Xavier, Braeden and Brian, always know that you are loved. A special acknowledgment goes to my twin sister, Shirley. Since we were very young, we have shared our hopes and dreams, and as adults, we have remained closely connected, even though we have lived in different states over the years. I love you, Shirley. To my sisters, Lucille, Frankie, and Suzy, and brothers Reilly, Amos, Bill, Frank, and Clarence and their children, thank you for all your support over the years. To Mickey, Evan, Malcolm Pigford, I appreciate you being here. Thanks to my brother-in-law Albert Bloom, Sr. and his wife Jeannette and their son, Corey for being here. I wish I had time to name all of my family and friends who are here, but I don't, so to all my invited guests, please stand and be recognized. All right. There you go. All right. Thank you very much.

Although I'm joined tonight with so many friends and family members, 2 of the most important people in my life—my parents—Frank and Octavia Culp are not here to celebrate with me. Both

died over 20 years ago, but their influence and spirit still remains within me. My parents were homesteaders in the 1920s, coming to [Arizona](#) from [Nashville, Tennessee](#) and [Ozark, Alabama](#). They lived a farming life, raising a combined family of 11 children. Although my parents depended on me to help with my dad's pig farm and earn extra money in the summer pitching watermelons in [California](#) with my older brothers and doing odd jobs whenever I could, they supported me when I had the opportunity to leave home and move to the big city of [Tempe, Arizona](#) to attend and graduate from [Arizona State University](#). My parents were people of rigid faith and uncompromising discipline, but that helped me to become a successful student athlete. With their passing, I lost a lot of my family stories—some told and not remembered, and others yet untold. But I will always remember, love, and appreciate all that they did for me. Thank you, mom and dad.

I can't go any further without acknowledging two important team owners, the late [Lamar Hunt](#) and [Bud Adams](#). These are the men that made my professional playing days happen. Lamar Hunt was so welcome and kind to me. He even wrote me a handwritten letter that I keep to this day. Bud Adams was instrumental in getting me to Houston with the [Oilers](#) and to him, I am eternally grateful. Good owners make great players, and this is what these owners did for me. Thank you.

Now what can I say about two of the greatest coaches a player could ever work with? [Hank Stram](#) gave me that opportunity to join the [Kansas City Chiefs](#), which changed the whole course of my professional football career. A few people know that Hank Stram visited Arizona State University athletic banquet, and there, we had an opportunity to visit. He said, "Curley, if I ever get an opportunity to add you to my team," he would. He was a man of his word. Hank was not tall in stature, but he had a long vision about the game and how it should be played. He believed we play as a team, we lose as a team, and we win as a team. Discipline in training, effort by all, and believe in ourselves—that was the driving force of his coaching philosophy. To Phyllis, his wife, he was a good man, and Kansas City will always remember his one-of-a-kind style.

What other coach had an opera written about them? Well, that's the one and only, [Bum Phillips](#). Bum was a player's coach, and once Lou Saban traded me to come join the Houston Oilers, a whole new dimension of defensive football began for me. Playing nose tackle and the 3-4 defense was a hallmark of Bum's defensive strategy. He was always loose and let us develop as a team. A huge shout out to Bum and to the Oilers—the guys that set in motion an [Astrodome](#) era that was like no other in Houston franchise history and made my time with the Oilers and unforgettable one.

I have learned so much over my life at [Yuma High School](#), Arizona State University, [University of Houston](#), and [University of Texas](#). I've learned that education helps you to believe and understand the basic worth of every human being, no matter what his or her viewpoint may be. I have learned that football is not just a sport, but a life-lesson in what it means to be a team player. I've learned that there are many good people in the world who love to play this sport and recognize the value of sports as an avenue for building character. I've also learned from and admired the courage and wisdom of those who have coached me over the years. I have learned how pain can build character and endurance, and believe that life itself is like playing a very long and exciting football game, where every play can determine the outcome. In life, as in sports, we should play hard and clean and always do our best to succeed.

Being elected into the Pro Football Hall of Fame has helped me to remember and appreciate the guidance, mentoring, and a deep faith in God, to ensure that my path was one that would make all the people close to me proud. My parents gave me that faith, and it has taken me a long way and continues to do so even today. You know, my life has been tremendously enriched by playing in this game and in the incredible league whose members are passionate about this sport. The Hall of Fame Museum is an incredible place dedicated to documenting the stories of extraordinary men—men who just wanted to play the game and found their niche in life doing so. I am just overwhelmed by the struggles, joys, and tears of those who have made it here, and I am proud to join this elite group of men and pleased to pass the torch on to future Hall of Famers. Hopefully our stories, preserved forever in the Hall of Fame, will remind us and demonstrate to others what hard work and team work can produce. I just want to thank everyone whom I've worked with over the years. Each one has a very special place in my heart, and I'll always remember this time in my life with continued pleasure.

It is an honor for me to be placed among all of these great Hall of Famers. Just as it was an honor to wear the great red and white of the Kansas City Chiefs and the blue and white of the Houston Oilers, I am now honored and humbled to wear Hall of Fame gold. To all future athletes—keep training, keep connecting with the community, and keep all of those here on this stage tonight in your prayers. Again, thank you so much for this honor.

Good evening.