**Team History**

The Chicago Bears are one of only two charter members of the National Football League still in existence. Their 1,000-game history started in Decatur, Ill. in 1920 when the Staley Starch Company decided to sponsor a football team. Then on September 17, 1920, the Staleys, with George Halas as their representative, joined the American Professional Football Association, which was renamed the National Football League in 1922. The franchise fee was $100.

In 1921, the Staley Starch Company gave Halas the team, $5,000 and permission to move the team to Chicago if he would agree to keep the Staleys name for a year. The Staleys won the 1921 league championship. A year later, the team was renamed the Chicago Bears.

From the very start, the Bears were one of pro football's most successful and innovative franchises. They were the first to buy a player from another team -- $100 for Ed Healey from Rock Island in 1922. The Bears signed the fabled collegiate All-America, Red Grange, in 1925 and then showcased him before the first huge pro football crowds.

In 1932, they defeated the Portsmouth Spartans 9-0 to win the championship in the first NFL game to be played indoors. The next year, they inaugurated the NFL championship series by defeating the New York Giants, 23-21.

The Bears kicked off the 1940s with four straight NFL championship appearances. The Bears won three, including the famous 73-0 annihilation of the Washington Redskins in 1940. Despite winning nearly 60 percent of their games in the 1950s, the Bears did not win an NFL title and made only one playoff appearance. They finally broke a 17-year championship drought with a 14-10 win over the New York Giants in 1963.

Almost all of the successes on and off the field for the Bears in the 64-year period between 1920 and 1983 can be attributed to George (Papa Bear) Halas, who served the Bears as an owner, player, coach, general manager, traveling secretary, and in virtually every other capacity imaginable. Halas split his 40-year coaching into four 10-year segments. When he retired after the 1967 season, he ranked as the all-time leader in coaching victories with 324, a record that stood for 27 years.

Halas died on October 31, 1983, but the Bears tradition is carried on today by grandson George McCaskey who serves as the club's Chairman of the Board. In its first 74 years, the team compiled a 586-384-42 overall record. Chicago qualified for the playoffs 21 times, won 19 division titles, eight NFL championships and Super Bowl XX.

The Bears also have the proud distinction of listing the most long-time team members as Pro Football Hall of Fame enshrinees. Such names as Red Grange, Bronko Nagurski, Sid Luckman, Dick Butkus, Gale Sayers, Walter Payton, Bulldog Turner, Danny Fortmann and Halas himself are true legends not only of the Bears, but of pro football itself.

For their first 51 seasons in Chicago, the Bears played in Wrigley Field, the famous home of the Chicago Cubs baseball team. Since 1971, with the exception of one season in 2002 during the stadium's renovation, they have played in Soldier Field in downtown Chicago.