

First-Time Homer

Of the thousands of professional baseball players who have stepped up to the plate over the game's history, until the morning of September 2, 1997, only 73 had had the distinct thrill of hitting a home run the first time at bat in their major league career. On this date, Montreal Expos outfielder Brad Fullmer became the 74th, with a pinch-hit, two-run shot off Boston Red Sox pitcher Brett Saberhagen.

Does such an auspicious beginning suggest great things to come for Brad Fullmer? Fullmer thought so: "It has to be a good sign," he said.

Gary Gaetti would add weight to that argument. In 1981, as a Minnesota Twin, he hit a homer his first time up and went on to hit 330 more by September 1997.

But after Gaetti and a handful of other fast starters, the numbers aren't very impressive. "Of the 73 players who preceded Fullmer," said Richard O'Brien and Hank Hersch in *Sports Illustrated*, "13 never hit another homer. Only two of the group's members have been enshrined in the Hall of Fame: Earl Averill and Hoyt Wilhelm, a pitcher."

When we take our first steps in a career with Life Care, American Lifestyles or Life Care at Home, it's nice to start with a bang. But whether we do or don't says little about our potential and what we're really made of. That is proven over time.

--Beecher Hunter