

# 'Mr. Baseball' Steve Kraly leaves mark in Tier

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(Photo: File photo)

Steve Kraly, local baseball legend, former New York Yankees pitcher and longtime official scorer at Binghamton Mets games, died at 7:25 a.m. Monday following a long battle with cancer. The Johnson City resident was 86.

Kraly was diagnosed with cancer in February 2015.

"He kept saying he was going to beat it even at the age of 86," his son Steve said. "He's my idol."

Steve said his father had been cared for by many family members, including several from out of state, in recent weeks while staying with his daughter Kathy Palmer in Johnson City. Kathy and Steve's wife, Lori, led what Steve described as a true "family effort."

He was predeceased by his wife of 49 years, Irene, who died in 2006. Kraly is survived by four children, Steve a resident of Apalachin, Tom a resident of Whitney Point, Kathy Palmer a Johnson City resident, Bob a resident of Virginia Beach, Va., and six grandchildren.

Calling hours will be held Thursday from 3:30-7:30 p.m. (<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/pressconnects/obituary.aspx?n=stephen-c-kraly&pid=177972124&fhid=13287>) at St. James Roman Catholic Church on Main Street in Johnson City. The funeral service will take place on Friday morning at 9:30 a.m. at St. James Roman Catholic Church.

Kraly, a native of Whiting, Indiana, had been a fixture in the press box at B-Mets games since the franchise's inaugural season in 1992 until last season when his illness prevented him from scoring games on a regular basis.



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"Our community just lost one of its icons," former B-Mets President and co-owner Mike Urda said. "Aside from being a great ambassador for baseball, Steve was one of the finest, most likable human beings I ever met. He had a big heart and he lit up a room when he walked into it. A very classy man who loved his wife, he'll now be with her probably dancing in heaven. God bless him and his wife. It's a sad day for this community."

Kraly, a 5-foot-10, 155-pound left-hander, signed with the New York Yankees as an amateur free agent in 1949. His stops in the minor leagues included a season in Independence, Kansas, in 1949 and Joplin, Missouri, in 1950 before a two-year interruption by his service in the Army.

In 1953, he posted an outstanding 19-2 record and pitched 19 complete games for a Binghamton Triplets team that went on to win the Eastern League championship. He made his major league debut on Aug. 9, and appeared in five games, including three starts.

He went 0-2 with a 3.24 ERA and recorded one save with the Yankees in 1953. In his final start of that season, he allowed one run in eight innings and took the loss as the Yankees fell 1-0 to Cleveland and future Hall of Fame pitcher Bob Lemon. Kraly received a World Series ring as part of the Yankees 1953 championship team.

Kraly went into the Binghamton Baseball Shrine in 1997, and will be [inducted into the Greater Binghamton Sports Hall of Fame next month](http://www.pressconnects.com/story/sports/2016/03/01/greater-binghamton-hall-of-fame/81135034/)

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Former Press & Sun-Bulletin sports editor and columnist John W. Fox covered the Triplets during Kraly's historic season.

"He was really highly regarded when he came here," Fox said. "He just had a tremendous year. He was gone from here on July 31 so his 19-2 was all in, I don't know how many games they had by then."

Fox called that year's Triplets staff "probably as good a pitching staff as Binghamton ever saw."

After retiring from professional baseball – his last season in the minors was 1960 – Kraly worked for IBM in Owego. He served as official scorer for B-Mets home games from 1992 through the 2014 season. When he spoke about baseball, he had a tendency to draw a captive audience.

"You know what it was, he told great stories about not only his playing days but even his experiences working up in the press box since the B-Mets came to town in the early 90s," B-Mets general manager Jim Weed said. "He obviously had some great stories of when he played, and those were always fascinating.

"The funny thing is you would think that when you're with him enough you'd hear some of those stories over and over. You never did. You never heard the same story."

Kraly remained entrenched as the team's official scorer for more than 20 years, though he had "retired" on more than one occasion only to return without missing a season.

The B-Mets never actively looked for a replacement because when spring rolled around, Kraly found his way back into the scorer's seat in the press box.

Scotty Brown, who was the B-Mets general manager from 2005 to 2009, currently works as the general manager of the Triple-A Charlotte Knights of the International League.

"He's like Mr. Baseball in Binghamton," Brown said. "He had done it all, seen it all, been through it all and enjoyed it all. He loved the game."

Brown hasn't worked in Binghamton in seven years, but still has a signed picture of Kraly framed in his office at the ballpark in Charlotte, N.C. Brown said he'll remember Kraly most for his love of the game and his feistiness when it came to his rulings as scorer. He'd bark right back at any manager who questioned his call, but all would be forgotten the next day.

Lou Ferraro, a longtime B-Mets employee and a former local baseball coach and umpire, got to know Kraly when Ferraro was part of the Endicott Umpires Association in the 1980s and Kraly served as director of recreation at IBM. Ferraro later had Kraly as a guest speaker when he operated the Triple Cities Baseball Clinic along with longtime Union-Endicott coaches Ed Folli and Pete Sylvester. Kraly once signed and personalized 120 autographed pictures for a group of youth and high school coaches, Ferraro said.

The two later worked together in the press box at B-Mets games. Ferraro recalled one instance in 1997 when the B-Mets hosted a Hall of Fame pitcher who refused to sign autographs or even a ball for a fundraiser for a sick child, and Kraly let loose a tirade before signing the ball himself.

"Steve made him feel about two feet tall," Ferraro said. "That's how Steve was. He wasn't afraid to say what he felt or how it was. That's what made him the tremendous gentleman he always was."

Ferraro and current Binghamton High School varsity baseball coach Dave Buchak both described Kraly as opinionated and at times brutally honest, but also kind enough to give you the shirt off his back if you needed it.

Buchak remembers Kraly taking time out to talk with some of his players when he was the varsity baseball coach at Johnson City High School. Buchak considered Kraly's old-school approach to baseball something he was lucky to have had as a resource in his own coaching career.

“Right in your own home town you had the ability to talk to a guy who played on the same field with some of the best baseball players on the face of the Earth in the history of the game,” Buchak said of his last memory of Kraly. “Just the wealth of knowledge of some of the things he has experienced, the things he has seen, the players he has worked with, that’s my biggest lasting memory.”



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