

LOCAL MAY 25, 2016 10:09 AM

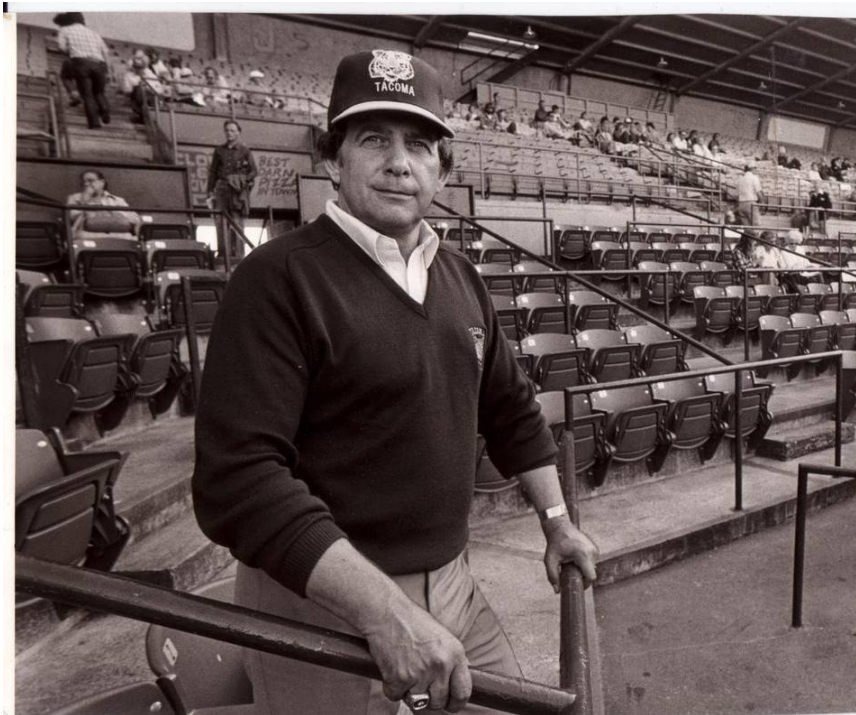
Stan Naccarato, who saved Triple-A baseball in Tacoma, dies at 88

HIGHLIGHTS

When team was about to leave town in 1971, pulled investors together to save it

A natural promoter, he also played key role in building of the Tacoma Dome

Involved in boxing, bowling and played minor-league baseball



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Stan Naccarato, Aug 16 1983.

BY JOHN MCGRATH
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Stan Naccarato, a former minor-league pitcher whose most clutch save was cobbling together enough last-minute investors to keep professional baseball in Tacoma, died Wednesday at Tacoma General Hospital. He was 88.

A tireless and seemingly ubiquitous presence around Tacoma sports circles for more than 60 years, Naccarato was involved in everything from boxing to indoor soccer. Although the self-described “people person” had no formal education in marketing, Naccarato put his considerable promotional skills to work toward the realization of the Tacoma Dome.

But Naccarato regarded himself, foremost, a baseball man. Two of his most precious material possessions were the World Series rings he was rewarded as president and general manager of the Tacoma Triple-A franchise that funneled talent to the New York Yankees, in

1978, and to the Oakland A's, in 1990.

The rings were the result of Naccarato's most significant career achievement. Upon learning of the Chicago Cubs' abrupt 1971 plan to relocate their Triple-A operations to Wichita, Kansas, Naccarato made a flurry of phone calls in the middle of the night. Some 16 hours later, he'd convinced 19 fellow investors to commit \$5,000 apiece for the preservation of Triple-A baseball in Tacoma.

The Minnesota Twins replaced the Cubs as Tacoma's Pacific Coast League affiliate, and by 1975, the franchise was so solidly entrenched that Naccarato was recognized by both the national association of minor-league clubs and The Sporting News as General Manager of the Year. He also was named winner of the Larry MacPhail Trophy as minor-league baseball's outstanding promoter.

"Stan did it his way, for the good of the people. He was never above the most modest fan," said Frank Colarusso, a Tacoma Tigers front-office associate of Naccarato for six years. "It saddens me to realize an entire generation of fans has no idea of who he was, or what he meant to keeping pro baseball in Tacoma. That's life – we evolve and move along – but everybody in our community should know that this man was a true icon."

Rainiers president Aaron Artman said the team will wear a commemorative patch on their jerseys and place a sign on the outfield wall at Cheney Stadium in remembrance of Naccarato's impact on the club and the community.

"Stan was a wonderful friend and mentor, a leader of not only this organization for decades, but for the entire city," Artman said in a release issued by the team. "He loved Tacoma maybe even more than he loved the Rainiers. We will honor him for the remainder of the 2016 season and remember the impact that he had on this city and this franchise forever."

Born in Tacoma on May 3, 1928, Stan Naccarato was raised in Spanaway, where his father, a Tacoma Ledger pressman, taught him how to throw a baseball. Childhood practices on the front lawn helped groom Naccarato into an ace right-hander at Clover Park High and a Cincinnati Reds prospect, assigned to the Reds' farm-league affiliate at Ogden, Utah.

"I saw him pitch when he was 16, and I was convinced he was a future major leaguer," said Naccarato's longtime friend, Doug McArthur. "He could really bring it."

Naccarato pitched well in high-altitude Ogden – he finished the 1947 season with a 15-6 record, and went 13-7 the following year – but arm troubles doomed his playing career. Upon returning to Tacoma, Naccarato opened a shoe store with business partner Morley Brotman.

The shoe-store connection proved pivotal in 1955, when a Tacoma amateur baseball team managed by McArthur was looking for a sponsor. "Stanley's Shoemen," which along with Woodworth Contractors and the Cheney Studs were among three Tacoma-area powerhouses regarded as potential national champions, won the 1956 American Baseball Congress title at Battle Creek, Michigan.

"Stan was there," said McArthur. "His involvement with a team that put Tacoma on the United States baseball map was one of the great thrills his life. And what a life: He's been called 'Mr. Tacoma' and 'Stan the Man.' By any title, I don't think Tacoma ever had a better salesman than Stanley. He could have gone lots of places, but he didn't ever want to leave."

After McArthur accepted the role as point man of the challenging campaign to enlist support for the Tacoma Dome in 1978 – the community was divided over the location, and six bond-issue referendums for the project had failed – he sought assistance from the former sponsor of his baseball team.

"We spoke to 72 organizations in one year, from the West End Kiwanis to the McKinley Hill boosters, and Stan did a lot of the talking," said McArthur. "The last vote, in 1980, ended up with 70 percent approval."

“There weren’t many formalities about salesmanship in those days. You either were a salesman, or you weren’t. Stan was a born salesman.”

Despite stepping away from Triple-A baseball after California poultry magnate George Foster bought the franchise in 1991, Naccarato remained a prominent presence in the Tacoma sports community. He served as boxing-ring announcer for several years at the Emerald Queen – he appeared to be as comfortable in a tuxedo as Fred Astaire – and more recently could be seen at Tower Lanes, the Sixth Avenue bowling and entertainment center where his wife Jeanne, a U.S. Bowling Congress Hall-of-Famer, is part-owner.

“I wouldn’t be here today if it weren’t for sports,” Naccarato said in 2005. “You can see my love for my hometown. I think it is as beautiful here as it is in San Francisco. I will sell it to anybody and I always will. I’ve had a love affair with this town my entire life.”

Naccarato never was shy about sharing his opinions, a trait sometimes exasperated colleagues but one they that ultimately found endearing.

“I didn’t always agree with Stan, but I respected him because, at the end of the day, he was all about Tacoma,” said local sports historian Marc Blau, co-founder of the Shanaman Sports Museum. “His door was always open, and he was always willing to give advice.

“Stan was a doer. He found a way to make things happen. I love people like that.”

Said Colarusso, who upon Naccarato’s departure from the Tacoma Tigers took over as general manager: “I was described once as ‘Stan’s replacement,’ which isn’t accurate. I succeed him.

“Nobody could replace Stan Naccarato.”

In addition to his wife Jeanne, Naccarato is survived by sons David, Gordon, Steve and Stanton. Gordon and Steve are entrepreneurs who’ve sustained the family name in the city their father was proud to call home. Gordon is executive chef and vice president of the Naccarato Restaurant Group, which operates the Pacific Grill in downtown Tacoma. Steve is co-owner of Shake Shake Shake, a retro-style hamburger eatery in the Stadium District, and has plans to open a fish-and-chips restaurant on Sixth Avenue this summer.

Naccarato’s daughter, Gayle Naccarato Luhtala, died in April, 2015.

Memorial services are planned for early June at Saint Patrick Catholic Church in Tacoma.

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Christiane Beck · Hauptschule Polch

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Jim Jensen · Sr. Director, Branch Manager at Berkadia

He was a great man. What a leader.
He was "Mr. Tacoma". He will be missed.

Like · Reply · May 26, 2016 8:56pm



Camille Collins · Grays Harbor College

A Tacoma sports hero! My family had Tacoma baseball season tickets from the 60s to the 90s. I remember Stan well. He was always smiling and always working the crowd. He was a great promoter. I hope he gets a seat next to Ben Cheney in Cheney stadium.

Like · Reply · 2 · May 26, 2016 6:57pm



Robert Thoms · Tacoma City Councilman at City of Tacoma

Stan was a Wonderful Man, father, husband and leader and he will be greatly missed, but NEVER forgotten in our community. A debt of gratitude to him and his family for their unwavering support and leadership for Tacoma!

Like · Reply · 2 · May 26, 2016 6:27pm



Gordie Olson · Fire Chief at Thornton Fire Department

Stan had a big influence on my future. Back in 1981 I was a young Stuntman and met with Stan about a Fire Fall stunt from the top of the left field light tower for the local KTAC night at the park. He dubbed me "The Human Torch"; a name that stuck for a few years as I began a career as a firefighter in the Tacoma area until 2015; still serving today as a Fire Chief. Thanks Stan!

Like · Reply · May 26, 2016 2:58pm · Edited




Karst Brandsma · Tumwater High School

Stan was also a big supporter of high school sports in Tacoma and especially Tacoma Public Schools. He personally raised \$40,000 to help the District rebuild the track at Linclon Bowl and keep 'StarTrack' in Tacoma for the next 10 years. He was always supportive and played a key role in garnering community support to win the bid from the WIAA for the State Football Championships in what would later become the 'Gridiron Classic' in the Tacoma Dome. At the time Tacoma literally had the largest stadium in the Pacific Northwest. He helped the WIAA move from the University of Washington to the Tacoma Dome in 1997.

pluck the event (King Bowl) out of the Kingdome where it had its home since its inception in 1977.


My condolences to Jeanne and the entire Naccarato family. [Karst Brandsma](#), District Athletic Director, Tacoma Public Schools, 1989-1995

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Patricia Rivers Mannie · Clover Park Technical College

I loved in the 1970 when "Stan the Man" had the used cars on the baseball field

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Barbara E Miller · Works at Full Time Grandma

The ooohs! and ahhs! on the 4th of July were a big part of my 4th of July for years! When he stopped doing it, we missed it so much! We will always remember him and how much he loved the stadium! Our hearts go out to Jeanne and his sons.

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Camille Collins · Grays Harbor College

Yes, fireworks were never the same!

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John-Mark Mahnkey · Owner at Marquee Productions

This guy is one of my personal heroes.

He is directly responsible for many summers spent shucking and eating bags of Hoody's peanuts. Said nuts were usually consumed while bonding with my grandfather, as he explained the game of baseball at Cheney Stadium. It didn't matter if it was the Tacoma Tigers, Tugs, Rainiers, Twins, Cubs...the list goes on. It was quality time with my grandfather, Ray Mahnkey, and for that I am eternally grateful, as those memories will live on for years to come.

Hopefully his legacy does as well.

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Cheryl Huntington Franco · University of Washington

Tacoma has been a better place the last 70 years because of Mr. Stan Naccarato, we are forever grateful to him and for all he accomplished.....his sons have followed in his footsteps....Tacoma and his Family were everything to him, am honored to have had him in my life!!!

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