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Mike Brumley, former Spokane Indians catcher, dies

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By Jim Price

Correspondent

Mike Brumley, a former Spokane Indians catcher who became a prominent Baptist pastor, evangelist and missionary, died Aug. 8 in Grapevine, Texas, after a long illness. His home was in Keller, another Dallas suburb. He was 78.

Brumley was the primary receiver for Spokane's 1960 Pacific Coast League champions. Led by up-and-coming stars Willie Davis, Ron Fairly and Frank Howard, the Indians romped to the title with a 92-61 record. Twenty-two team members later played in the major leagues. A decade later, Brumley gave up professional baseball for a ministry that stretched across a wide portion of the world.

For Spokane in 1960, Brumley appeared in 82 games and batted .237. After two seasons at other stops in the Los Angeles Dodgers farm system, the three-time minor-league all-star rejoined the Indians in

system, the three-time minor-league all-star rejoined the Indians in 1963 and batted .292. His infield bouncer was Spokane's only hit on Aug. 23 when Ray Ripplemeyer pitched San Diego to a 4-0 victory.

That fall, the Washington Senators bought Brumley's contract. In 1964, he hit .244 and excelled on defense as their everyday catcher. After two more seasons with Washington and another two with his hometown Oklahoma City 89ers, he left the game at the age of 32.

Turning toward church service, Brumley was ordained and began a speaking career that relied heavily on his conversion from ballplayer to preacher, a story mirroring that of famed evangelist Billy Sunday, who had been a 19th-century big-league outfielder.

According to his widow, Carol, Brumley was active in the creation of Baseball Chapel, a national ministry to professional teams, and served as the pastor of churches in Bradenton, Florida, and Tulsa, Oklahoma. He later broadened his outreach to embrace far-flung missionary work that included teaching baseball to young people in many countries.

He was also the chaplain for the 1984 U.S. Olympic team.

Brumley died one week before Choo Choo Coleman, the colorful former New York Mets receiver who had been the primary catcher for Spokane's 1961 team.

Born Tony Mike Brumley, Brumley's survivors include a son, Anthony Michael Brumley, also known as Mike. The younger Brumley played several seasons as a major-league infielder and has remained in the game as a minor-league manager and major-league coach, including a stint with the Seattle Mariners

SENT WITH THE SEATTLE MARINERS.

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