



Gloucester County major leaguer who struck out Mickey Mantle and Roberto Clemente dies

Bob Shryock | South Jersey Times By **Bob Shryock | South Jersey Times**

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Edward Charles Keegan struck out future Hall of Famers Roberto Clemente and Mickey Mantle during his baseball career.

Edward Charles Keegan struck out future Hall of Famers Roberto Clemente and Mickey Mantle during his brief major league baseball career that was cut short by a spring training shoulder injury in 1961.

Keegan lamented his misfortune and the money he might have made as a fastballer who was clocked in the mid-90s as early as Haddonfield High School, but he did not dwell on it, instead watching his grandsons play soccer and standing ready as an assistant Little League coach.

"Ed was born too early," said Bob Keegan, one of Ed's two brothers, discussing the signing bonuses and bloated salaries for .500 pitchers that are commonplace today. "If he hadn't hurt his shoulder, he'd have been up (on big league rosters) for awhile."

Keegan, 75, who lived in Gloucester County most of his life, died Sunday at his daughter Cheryl Quieti's home in Franklinville. Cause of death was lymphoma.

"It's a major loss to South Jersey baseball; Ed was one of the all-time best," says Bill Wagner, who saw Keegan's fast ball as a Woodrow Wilson schoolboy and helped induct him in the South Jersey Baseball Hall of Fame.

Born in Camden in 1939, Keegan enjoyed a spectacular career at Haddonfield, posting a 26-and-2 three-year

composite, and giving up just 69 hits in 169 innings while striking out 297. His Haddonfield years made him an easy selection for the South Jersey hall, one of his several hall enshrinements.

Bob Keegan, who played baseball a year behind Ed, remembers his brother's blazer during warm-ups.

"When his fast ball hit the catcher's mitt, it sounded like a shotgun going off."

After signing with the Phillies in 1957, out of Haddonfield, righthander Keegan was sent to High Point in the Carolina League to complete his rookie season. He was assigned to Williamsport of the Eastern League at the outset of the 1958 campaign, and had a respectable 7-5, 3.20 ERA year.

Keegan made the Phils' major league roster in spring training in 1959 and had three starts before being shipped to Kansas City of the American League. His whirlwind travels took him back to Philadelphia and then to Buffalo, where he helped the Triple A club capture the Little World Series.

The 1960 season was forgettable. Keegan developed a shoulder injury in spring training and after several starts was sent home. He tried again in spring training 1961 but, when told the shoulder had not healed, was given his release.

"This was before Tommy John surgery," Bob Keegan says. "Ed was disappointed the Phils didn't pay for his surgery. After that, he wouldn't root for them anymore."

So Keegan's too-brief three-year major league career shows an 0-and-3 record but flashes of his devastating fast ball with 11 strikeouts in 23 innings.

One highlight came in a Phils' game in Pittsburgh when Keegan struck out Roberto Clemente with his seldom-used curve ball.

"The next time up, Clemente hit a home run off the same pitch," says Bob, recalling how his brother enjoyed telling the story. "Ed said Clemente put that one in orbit."

Keegan's other favorite strikeout won't appear with any regular season records. He fanned "The Mick," Mickey Mantle, in a spring training game.

Says his brother, "He was willing to talk about those years, but he was very humble and never wanted attention for himself."

After pro baseball, Keegan played the semi-pro circuit in Camden County, that patented fast ball still intimidating the hitters.

Keegan lived in Malaga most of his adult life and for seven years in the 1970s tended bar at Clayton's Rainbow Inn.

Ed endured his share of hardship. Hit by a drunk-driver while crossing Delsea Drive in Clayton 26 years ago, he was airlifted to Camden's Cooper Hospital, where he underwent the first of 19 surgeries on his right leg. Three years ago, the leg was amputated.

"My father loved the game of baseball more than life itself and only wished today's players had the same burning passion," says Cheryl, who was at her dad's bedside with her husband Frank and grandsons Sam and Zack when he died.

"He spent all his free time with his family and was at the Little League fields every night til the lights went out. He loved encouraging the kids and perhaps showing them how to hold the ball for certain pitches or just giving them a pat on the back."

Services are Saturday, 9 to 11 a.m., at Clayton Baptist Church.

Mourners will remember the man who struck out Roberto and The Mick.

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