

Longtime baseball, softball coach Youngblood, 79, dies

Jim Krajewski, RGJ 8:28 p.m. PST November 20, 2014



(Photo: Mike Youngblood / Provided by Mike Youngblood)

Longtime area baseball and softball coach Del Youngblood, who died last week, was remembered as a passionate and energetic baseball and softball coach by friends and relatives.

Youngblood died at age 79 from metachromatic leukodystrophy, an advanced form of dementia, at the Reno Veterans Administration hospital on Nov. 13.

Youngblood came to Reno in 1974 to be the general manager of the Reno Silver Sox, the Single-A minor league baseball affiliate of the Cleveland Indians and the Minnesota Twins.

When the Indians fired the manager halfway through the season, they offered Youngblood the position. The next season, the team moved to San Jose, where he coached the San Jose Bees.

Youngblood was the baseball coach at Nevada from 1980-82. He led the team to a 20-game win streak and the school broke into the NCAA Top 20.

Later, he dedicated his life to young athletes. Youngblood was an athletic administrator and became an expert in Title IX, developed to allow girls the opportunity to play sports in college.

Youngblood coached college women's softball at Feather River College, Incline High School, North Valleys, Hug and Kentucky Wesleyan College along with several youth tournament teams. He ended his coaching career at Incline from 2009-11.

"He was pretty active all the way through," his son, Mike Youngblood, said. "He knew about the scholarship aspect (of Title IX). A lot of the parents of the girls had no idea and he was able to connect them with schools. That's why he got into softball, to be able to connect girls to colleges."

Dan Gustin was the public address announcer for the Silver Sox in the 70s. He remembered Youngblood as a players' manager.

"He was a good baseball man. He brought a lot of energy to the Silver Sox. He brought a lot of energy and excitement. He brought some real baseball savvy to the Silver Sox," Gustin said. "He related to the players and to me. The players really liked to play for him. They knew he knew baseball. He liked baseball and he liked them. He wasn't a rah rah guy, but he was very enthusiastic."

Gary Powers took over at Nevada after Youngblood left there in 1982. Powers said Youngblood was helpful and good to talk about baseball with.

"I knew him as a really good baseball guy. I always enjoyed talking to Del about the game," Powers said. "He was really knowledgeable about the game."

Youngblood played baseball, basketball and football at Reedley College near Fresno, Calif. He was inducted into Reedley College's Hall of Fame in 2002.

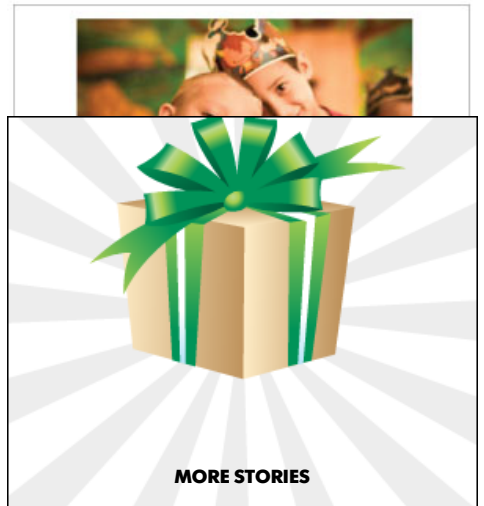
After graduating, Youngblood went on to become head coach of St. Mary's College of California in 1969, and then became assistant coach at Cal-Berkeley for four years.

Youngblood was born Truman O'Dell Youngblood in Merced, Calif. He was preceded in death by parents Edward Douglas and Juanita (Belter) Youngblood, his brother Jim Youngblood and the mother of his three sons, Shirley Rae Webber.

Surviving relatives include his wife Rebecca and sons, Mike, Bret and Chad, Rebecca's son Ross, along with six grandchildren.

A tribute for Youngblood is scheduled for Dec. 13 in the California room at Idlewild Park from 11 a.m.-2 p.m..

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