



Rinaldo Joseph Ardizoia

November 20, 1919 - July 19, 2015

Resided in San Francisco, CA

Obituary

Rinaldo Joseph "Rugger" Ardizoia was born in Oleggio, in Piemonte, Italy, on November 20, 1919. He immigrated to the United States with his mother, Annunziata (Mossina) Ardizzoia, at when he was two to join his father, Carlo Ardizzoia. The family settled in the Potrero Hill neighborhood of San Francisco. He took up baseball at an early age at Jackson Park, attended SF's High School of Commerce, and was named as a pitcher on the All-City team. He was elected to the SF Prep Hall of Fame. During his prep days, he played with or against such well-known SF baseball legends as Joe DiMaggio, Tony Lazzeri, and Frank Crosetti as well as other lesser known athletes. One of his best friends was Yankee Catcher Charlie Silvera, with six World Series Championship rings, but was prevented from being better known by another catcher on the team, Yogi Berra.

In 1937, at the age of 17, Rugger (now Ardizoia) was signed by SF's Mission Reds of the Pacific Coast League. The team moved a year later, and became the Hollywood Stars. He was signed by The New York Yankees in 1941, but his promising career was interrupted by World War II. He joined the Army Air Corps and served in the Pacific Theater until 1945. In 1946, he played for the Oakland Oaks, managed by Casey Stengel. He rejoined the Yankees in 1947, and appeared for two innings against the old St. Louis Browns, making him one of only seven native Italians to play in a big league game. In all, he played 15 years of professional baseball. Following that, he spent 30 years with National Linen Service until his retirement in 1981. For a recent account of his life, see the April 27, 2015, edition of The New York Times, for an article entitled "Rinaldo Ardizoia, the Oldest Living Yankee, Reflects on His Career," by Louie Lazar, and the Society for Baseball Research for a complete biography, which is included in the book "Bridging Two Dynasties: The 1947 New York Yankees" published by the University of Nebraska Press in 2013.

Rugger Ardizoia passed away on Sunday, July 19, one week after suffering a serious stroke, at his home of 75 years in the Excelsior neighborhood of SF. His wife of 61

years, Mary (Castagnola), passed away in 2003 and his daughter Janet, died in 2010. He is survived by his son, Bill (wife, Pat Duffy) of Santa Rosa; Janet's son, Chris Crawford (wife, Phuong and son, Luke] of Santa Clara; Janet's step-daughter, Wendy Dennis (husband, Dave, and three daughters) of Cedar Rapids Iowa; and the Mossina family of Oleggio, Italy, the place of his birth where he is still fondly remembered.

He was a past president of the SF Old Timers Baseball Association and the Marino Perreti Memorial Luncheon Group, and gave freely of his time to charitable and baseball-associated organizations. He was remarkably active and lucid in his later years, and served as the source of both background and anecdotal information for authors of numerous books on baseball history. One of the most notable is "56: Joe DiMaggio and the Last Magic Number in Sports" by Kostya Kennedy of Sports Illustrated.

Rugger's family wishes to thank all of the family members, friends, neighbors, and baseball aficionados for sharing his years of fun, laughter, and stories during his full life. Particular thanks go to the staff at UCSF Medical Center for their care and attention during his last days. A memorial mass and celebration of Rugger's life will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Friday, August 7, at Sts. Peter and Paul Church, 666 Filbert Street, San Francisco, CA. In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to Pacifica's Environmental Family/PBC, 601 Beaumont Blvd, Pacifica, CA 94044.