

Sports

Jim Fanning, manager and executive with Montreal Expos, dies at 87

By news services April 26

Jim Fanning, the longtime Montreal Expos executive who guided the club to its only playoff appearance before the franchise moved to Washington, died April 25 in London, Ontario. He was 87.

The Toronto Blue Jays confirmed the death. The cause was a heart attack, the Montreal Gazette reported.

Mr. Fanning was the Expos' general manager when the team entered the major leagues in 1968, and he spent 25 years with the franchise, which moved to Washington in 2005 and became the Nationals.

As field manager in the strike-shortened 1981 season, he led Montreal to the playoffs. After beating the Philadelphia Phillies, the Expos lost to the Los Angeles Dodgers in the National League Championship Series. As the Expos' manager in 1981, 1982 and 1984, Mr. Fanning had a record of 116-103.

"He was a lifelong baseball man," Bill Young, an author and historian of the Expos, told the Gazette. "He was involved with the Expos in every capacity: as the general manager, as field manager, as director of sales. He was even a broadcaster for a period on the radio."

While working with the Expos, Mr. Fanning made an effort to learn French. He was inducted into the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame in 2000 and also served as a team ambassador for the Blue Jays.

"Jim Fanning was a baseball pioneer in this country," said Scott Crawford, director of operations for the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame. "Without his tireless efforts, there may not be Major League Baseball in Canada. He was a tremendous talent evaluator, an astute general manager and a smart field manager."

William James Fanning was born in Chicago on Sept. 14, 1927, and attended high school in Moneta, Iowa. He played baseball at Buena Vista University in Iowa and the University of Illinois. He was a backup catcher with the Chicago Cubs from 1954 to 1957, with a .170 batting average in 64 games.

He became a Canadian citizen in 2012.

Survivors include his wife, Maria, and two children.

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