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Charlie Williams, the man who was traded for Willie Mays, dies

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Charlie Williams was a former big-league ballplayer, which afforded him a bit of celebrity among his local golf partners the past 20-plus years.

And though he was never a star during his eight years pitching in Major League Baseball, Charlie Williams was certainly well known, because in 1972, Charlie Williams was the man who was traded for Willie Mays.



News-Journal file

This is Charlie Williams' 1975 Topps card.

"He'd actually tell everybody that Willie Mays was traded for him," Harold Glover, one of Williams' longtime golf partners, said Wednesday.

Williams, who moved to Port Orange from his native New York in the 1980s, died Tuesday at age 67. He'd battled a variety of health problems in recent years, and friends said he was hospitalized over the holidays after heart surgery and never recovered.

Williams, born in Flushing, was drafted by his hometown New York Mets in the seventh round of the 1968 amateur draft. He reached the majors and became the first Flushing native to pitch for the hometown organization in 1971. He pitched in 31 games for the Mets in '71, but began the '72 season at the Mets' Triple-A farm team in Tidewater, Virginia.

Across the country in San Francisco, a baseball god was turning 41 and steadily losing the form that had him ticketed for Cooperstown and the Hall of Fame — only because baseball doesn't have a Mount Rushmore, many long-ago Willie Mays fans will say.

Mays had started his career and became a household name as a New York Giant before that franchise relocated to San Francisco in 1958. The Mets and Giants worked a deal to "bring Willie home" in May 1972. In the deal, the Mets got a living legend who'd help bring fans to Shea Stadium; the Giants got \$50,000.

And Charlie Williams.

Williams had a decent MLB career from 1971-78, appearing in 268 games, largely as a reliever, with a career record of 23-22 and a 3.97 ERA. But getting traded for Mays,

one of the game's immortals, was Williams' calling card among hard-core fans and legions of trivia buffs.

Williams' enduring attachment to Mays came as a surprise to his sister, Barbara Eggermann, who came down from New Jersey a few weeks ago, with her husband, to visit her ailing brother.

"We're not baseball fans," she said. "And we get baseball cards in the mail every day from people wanting an autograph from my brother. We were amazed after all these years that he'd still be known."

Williams originally moved to Port Orange in the 1980s to help with his aging parents, and after their death he stayed in the area. Glover was a regular golf partner of Williams' at several local courses, but said Williams' outings slowed in recent years due to deteriorating health.

"He had Parkinson's and got to where he could hardly get the ball on the tee. He got to where he didn't play very much," Glover said.

Funeral arrangements are pending, according to Williams' sister.

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