**Paper: Times-Picayune, The (New Orleans, LA)**

**Deceased: VETERAN CABBIE, EX-ATHLETE 'SAM' DEMMA SR. DIES AT 74**

**Date: July 29, 1995**

Salvadore Joseph "Sam" Demma Sr., a longtime United Cab Co. driver and former professional baseball player, died Thursday of complications from a stroke at Pendleton Memorial Methodist Hospital. He was 74.

Mr. Demma was born and raised in Metairie and lived in New Orleans for the past 50 years.

During more than half a century behind the wheel of Cab 101 and 30 years on United's board of directors, Mr. Demma often drew public attention, such as when he introduced Checker Motors' distinctive, boxy taxis to the United fleet in 1968. He later credited their bulletproof partitions with saving him from a gun-wielding passenger.

Recently, the National Enquirer named him "America's Safest Cab Driver" based on his record of never having had an accident.

Until he suffered a stroke this month, Mr. Demma continued working seven days a week, although he'd cut back on his hours, United Cab General Manager Vic Ruffino said. "Everybody knew him. . . . Sam liked to mix with the people, " he said.

Before settling into his cab-driving career, Mr. Demma spent nine seasons as a catcher with minor-league baseball teams in several Southern states and New Jersey, said baseball historian Arthur Schott of New Orleans. During his final five seasons, Mr. Demma doubled as his club's manager, Schott said.

"He played a total of 666 games in organized baseball and had a lifetime batting average of .278, " Schott said. "He was the possessor of a most powerful throwing arm." In 1978, Schott helped add Mr. Demma to the Diamond Club of Greater New Orleans' Hall of Fame, which honors local participants in professional baseball.

Survivors include his wife, Macy C. Demma; four sons, Michele, Ernest, Salvadore Jr. and Philip Demma; a daughter, Maria D. Vitellaro; a brother, Emile Demma; three sisters, Sadie D. Sortino, Lucy D. Sortino and Josephine Ruppert; eight grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

A Mass will be said today at noon at Jacob Schoen & Son Funeral Home, 3827 Canal St. Visitation will begin at 10 a.m. Burial will be in Greenwood Cemetery.

*Author: SUSAN FINCH Staff writer*

*Section: METRO*

*Page: B5*

*Copyright, 1995, The Times-Picayune Publishing Corporation. All Rights Reserved. Used by NewsBank with Permission.*