

World's a sadder place without Charipar

Written by Jim Ecker

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I have sad news to pass along today.

Ken Charipar, an outstanding person and a great baseball guy, died Monday night in Cedar Rapids. He was 80. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Patricia, their daughters and their family.

Ken battled a long list of serious health problems in recent years, yet always kept a positive outlook and never complained. He survived a heart attack, bypass surgery, esophageal cancer and pneumonia, always bouncing back with determination and a smile.

He joked about it being the bottom of the ninth with two outs, but that he kept fouling off pitches to stay in the game. Well, they finally got him out, but not before a long, productive and inspirational life of giving and sharing.

Many of you probably knew Ken from his various baseball activities. He was a very successful coach of American Legion teams in Cedar Rapids and went to the Legion World Series several times. One of his star players in the 1970s was Mike Boddicker, who later became a son-in-law and major league pitcher.

Ken was an assistant coach for the Iowa Hawkeyes for 11 years, and after that helped coach his grandsons on youth baseball teams. He always stressed the right things to those kids ... the right baseball fundamentals, but also the right approach to the game, with respect for your opponent, the umpires, your coaches and the fans. That was more important to Ken than winning or losing a game.

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Ken was an accomplished player himself. He was the last survivor of the Cedar Rapids Wilson High School Ramblers, who won a state baseball title in 1947, and played one year of minor league baseball in Duluth in the old Class "C" League in 1951.

If you've ever watched a high school baseball game at Xavier High School in Cedar Rapids, you've noticed the sign on the big scoreboard that says "Charipar Field," in honor of Coach Ken. Several of his grandsons have played on that field.

In my opinion, Ken was a member of the "Greatest Generation" in this country. He didn't fight in World War II – he was too young for that – but he stood for all the solid, old-fashioned values that made this country great.

Ken Charipar was a great man. He'll be sorely missed and impossible to replace in our lives and minds. Rest easy, good friend.

Funeral services

The wake and funeral will both be held at St. Jude Catholic Church in Cedar Rapids. There will be a 3 p.m. Rosary followed by visitation and a service at 7 p.m. Friday. The funeral will take place Saturday at 10 a.m.