

Carl P. Kelley Dies at Age 84; Former Softball - Omaha World-Herald (NE) - July 28, 1992 - page 17sf

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Carl P. Kelley, softball commissioner when Omaha grew from 161 to 2,700 teams to earn recognition as the softball capital of the nation, died Monday. He was 84.

Kelley died of congestive heart failure, said his wife, Lola.

"He went peacefully," Mrs. Kelley said. "The chaplain was in the room and said, 'Carl just slid into home.' I thought that was very appropriate."

Funeral arrangements were pending.

Kelley had been hospitalized about two weeks ago. About a week earlier, he had suffered a cracked rib when he fell in the bleachers at a softball game.

Kelley served as president of the Omaha Softball Association for 25 years and as Metro Omaha commissioner for the Amateur Softball Association for 32 years.

He was the OSA's first president in 1953 and coordinated a program for 161 teams.

In 1957 he was named Metro Omaha commissioner, and softball reached its zenith in the late 1970s and early 1980s with about 2,700 teams and 30,000 players. Based on population, Omaha was recognized as the softball capital of the nation.

"He put Omaha on the map as far as softball is concerned," said John Cahill, current OSA president. "When you think of coed softball, you think of Carl Kelley. He started the game. From playing on some very good coed teams that won some city championships, I appreciate what he did."

"Softball was an important part of his life, but it ranked third behind family and church."

Kelley was a member of Calvary Baptist Church.

As commissioner, Kelley took a hard line with players who used profanity on the field.

Kelley, who was inducted into the OSA Hall of Fame in 1966, retired as commissioner at the end of 1989 but remained active as a board member for the OSA.

The City of Omaha named a softball complex near 124th and Fort Streets to honor Kelley and his wife.

Carl P. Kelley was born Oct. 31, 1907. He attended **Howard Kennedy** grade school and Omaha

Tech High School. He was captain of the 1925 Tech baseball team that included Mel Harder, who later became a major leaguer, and former Mayor Johnny Rosenblatt.

In 1924, he was given a bat by Babe Ruth at an exhibition baseball game in Omaha.

"I got plenty of hits with that bat," Kelley often told friends. "It wasn't until later that I realized the significance of having a bat once owned by Babe Ruth."

He was an insurance agent for about 32 years before retiring in 1967.

He is survived by his wife, Lola; sons Dean and Marvin, 12 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren.

Carl P. Kelley 1980 Photo

CITATION (APA STYLE)

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