



Gary Carter, when he played in Little League as a 12-year-boy

Gary Edmund Carter (April 8, 1954 – February 16, 2012) (nickname "**The Kid**")

Today is a sad day for sports fans as we mourn the loss of one of the premiere ambassadors behind the quality growth of little league baseball programs throughout America. A local hero and one of our own within the community of Fullerton, Gary Carter was a wonderful teacher and embraced the responsibilities of a role model to children across both the USA and throughout Canada. Gary passed away this afternoon from a malignant brain tumor diagnosed last May, he was 57.

A member of Fullerton Little League and graduate of Sunny Hills High School, Carter would demonstrate in his lifetime a will to improve and succeed that far outweighed incredible athletic abilities. His nickname "The Kid" was coined by teammates after his first Spring Training in 1974 due to his tremendous competitive desire to win every drill he took part in regardless of who was observing. His warm demeanor and passion for teaching the game to children made him a fan favorite in each and every one of the cities he played in professionally throughout his 19 year Major League Baseball career.

Gary Carter was a winner in every aspect of his life. Married in 1975 to the present, he was a devoted father of 3 children. A member of Baseball's Hall of Fame and as the first Expo to do so, his #8 was permanently retired by Montreal in 2003. Carter was a member of the 1986 World Series Champion New York Mets and was a 2 time All-Star Game MVP. Other achievements and awards include a 3 time Gold Glove winner, a 5 time Silver Slugger award, 2nd in voting for the 1975 Rookie of the Year award, and the Roberto Clemente Award winner in 1989.

When the catcher was elected to the Hall of Fame, Stephen D. Keener, Little League International president and chief executive officer, said, "Besides being an outstanding player, Gary Carter exemplifies the kind of person that parents hope their Little Leaguer can become. ... He truly is one of the good guys."

Hall of Famer Mike Schmidt said Carter continued to inspire him in later years. In a 2006 column for The Associated Press, the former Phillies star recalled the pure elation that enveloped Carter when he was voted into Cooperstown on his 6th opportunity.

"No player ever appreciated that call to the extent he did. The joy it brought him, his family, and friends, especially me, was so real and pleasantly genuine, I ate it up and still do," Schmidt wrote.

"He does not take it for granted. He will wear his emotion, from this election, on his sleeve the rest of his life," he wrote. "His induction actually made me appreciate mine all the more."

As a little league coach, Carter would take his Little League League team to within a single victory of a berth to Williamsport for the World Series Tournament before losing in the

qualifying game. He is considered to be one of the best four catchers to ever play the game of baseball and is mentioned with the likes of Yogi Berra, Carlton Fisk and Johnny Bench. In 1961 as a 7 year old Carter "The Kid" would win the NFL's Punt, Pass and Kick competition. There was no task that he ever considered was above his ability to achieve and he rose to occasions presented in big games above all others.

Gary Carter is best remembered for being his own man. Always with a huge smile on his face he loved playing this game. When a football scholarship to UCLA was offered, Gary would decline and instead opt to change to the catcher position in order to perfect the art of the field general as he was selected in the 3rd round of the 1972 MLB draft originally as a shortstop. His greatest achievements were his ability to rally his team with a sacrifice fly, a great defensive play behind the plate or a simple single to start one of the greatest rallies in World Series history. His energy and positive attitude were infectious.

His accomplishments as a child are legendary to this day. His glove which bears the signatures of a 12-year-old Gary Carter and his Fullerton Little League teammates after he pitched a perfect game on May 12, 1966 and other memorabilia are part of an ongoing traveling display called "Baseball as America" and are available for viewing at the Peter J McGovern Little League Museum in South Williamsport Pa.

Although Gary's mother passed away when he was 12 years of age and never had the opportunity to see her son play in the major leagues his father Jim was his mentor and coach for many years and in 1985 was recognized along with his deceased wife as little league parents of the year. Gary made them proud and today we should all be proud of such a wonderful man and the legacy he leaves for our community and youth baseball everywhere. The lessons he taught will endure for future generations. God Bless and rest in peace.