

Hall Of Famer Killebrew, 74, Dies Of Cancer

BY DAVE CAMPBELL
AP Sports Writer

MINNEAPOLIS — Harmon Killebrew earned every bit of his frightening nickname, hitting tape-measure home runs that awed even his fellow Hall of Famers.

Yet there was a softer side to "The Killer," too.

The balding gentleman who enjoyed a milkshake after each game. The fisherman who was afraid of bumping into alligators. The MVP who always had time to help a rookie.

Killebrew, the big-swinging slugger for the Minnesota Twins and the face of the franchise for so many years, died Tuesday at age 74 after battling esophageal cancer.

"It's a sad day. We lost an icon. We lost Paul Bunyan," former Twins star Kent Hrbek said.

The team said Killebrew died peacefully at his home in Scottsdale, Ariz., with his wife, Nita, and their family at his side. He announced his diagnosis just six months ago, and last week Killebrew said he was settling in for the final days of his life with hospice care after doctors deemed the "awful disease" incurable.

At Target Field, the scoreboard showed a picture of a smiling Killebrew and his retired No. 3 was etched in the dirt behind second base. Plus, there was a more personal tribute — the Twins' ground crew slowly lifted home plate and put under it a plastic-encased, black-and-white photo of Killebrew.

The picture, believed to be from the 1960s, will stay beneath the plate the rest of the season. It shows, naturally, the compact Killebrew poised to go deep.

And boy, could he take a big cut.

His 573 home runs still rank 11th on the all-time list. His upper-cut swing formed the silhouette that inspired Major League Baseball's official logo.

also

■ Harmon Killebrew The Most Gracious Of The Greats. PAGE 8

Killebrew's longest home run.

Much farther away, Killebrew was on the minds of current major leaguers.

"We were just talking about him this morning," Atlanta star Chipper Jones said after the Astros-Braves game Tuesday.

"He looked like one of those big strong, country horses. You don't see guys like that anymore. He was a guy who really overpowered the baseball," he said.

Nearby, teammate Eric Hinske nodded his head.

"He was as intimidating as hell," Hinske added.

But he wasn't always the tough guy. Philadelphia Phillies manager Charlie Manuel became friends with Killebrew and Bob Allison during his first spring training with the Twins and often fished together in a Florida lake.

"There were some alligators in there, others and things like that in there that would bump up against your leg," Manuel said. "They would get scared. So I would take the fish chain and hook it to the boat, and I'd wade and pull the boat. That was part of being a rookie."

Whether as an 18-year-old with the Washington Senators in 1954 or playing for Kansas City in his final season in 1975, Killebrew carried himself the same unassuming way. "He never walked around with

Along with a statue in his likeness outside Target Field, there's a giant bronze glove where fans pose for snapshots — the glove is 520 feet from home plate, fittingly the distance of



JEFF WHEELER/MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE/MCT
Kent Hrbek, from left, Tony Oliva and Paul Molitor speak about former Minnesota Twins player Harmon Killebrew at Target Field in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Tuesday, May 17, 2011. Killebrew passed away today after a nearly five-month battle with esophageal cancer. He was 74.

his nose in the air. Never, ever. He used to go out after every game and get a milkshake. A super guy," said former Royals second baseman Frank White, a youngster who played with Killebrew that final year.

Hrbek's suburban home was mere blocks from old Metropolitan Stadium, a future Twins first baseman who became Minnesota's next true home-run hitter after being inspired by all those trips to the left-field bleachers to watch No. 3 bat fourth and aim for the fence, and beyond.

"You didn't ever leave the ballpark if the Twins had the chance to tie the ballgame or win the ballgame and Harmon was making it to the plate," Hrbek said.

He joined five other former Twins players at Target Field on Tuesday to share memories of Killebrew. Jack Morris, the 1991 World Series MVP and another native of the Twin Cities, grew up cheering for Killebrew during his heyday in the late 1960s.

"I lost a hero today," Morris said, his voice cracking and his eyes watering.

"To remember the innocence of being a young kid who just looked up to a guy he didn't know because of what he did as a baseball player, something that you hoped that maybe some day you could be like," Morris said. "But as a grown man, I look back at him now not as that guy, but as the guy who tried to show me that you don't have to be angry. You don't have to be mad. You can love and share love. We're all going to miss him, and we're all going to love him forever."

Killebrew was the American League MVP in 1969 at age 33 with 49 homers and 140 RBIs. His eight seasons with 40 or more homers still are tied for second in history to Babe Ruth.

Twins President Dave St. Peter said the team will wear a No. 3 patch on the uniforms for the rest of the season. A replica of his smooth, eloquent signature — Killebrew chided current Twins player

Michael Cuddyer earlier in his career for a sloppy autograph — will be printed on the outfield wall. The team also planned a public memorial service, likely for May 26.

With strong competition from Kirby Puckett in the generation that followed him, Killebrew will go down as perhaps the best-loved Twins player ever, possibly in all of Minnesota sports. Killebrew Root Beer is sold at Target Field, and there's a Killebrew Drive next to the mall where Metropolitan Stadium once stood in suburban Bloomington.

Killebrew spent most of his first five seasons in the minors, then hit 42 homers in his first full season in 1959. The Senators moved to Minnesota in 1961, and Killebrew hit 190 homers in his first four years there, including 49 in 1964.

The Washington Nationals included him in the Ring of Honor at their ballpark and hosted him for a game at Nationals Park last year.

"We shall long treasure that evening and the gentlemanly impression left by Harmon," Nationals principal owner Ted Lerner said.

Former Twins owner Calvin Griffith used to call Killebrew the backbone of the franchise.

"He kept us in business," Griffith once said.

Behind their soft-spoken slugger, a native of Payette, Idaho, the Twins reached the World Series for the first time in 1965 and back-to-back AL Championship series in 1969 and 1970. Killebrew was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1984, the first Twins player to be enshrined. Killebrew's No. 3 jersey was retired in 1975.

That easygoing demeanor contrasted starkly with his intimidating standing.

"I didn't have evil intentions," Killebrew once said. "But I guess I did have power."

Killebrew never worried much about his short game, preferring instead to swing for the fences. He had a career .256 average.

On June 3, 1967, Killebrew hit the longest home run in Met Stadium history, a shot that reached the second deck of the bleachers in the old park, some 500 feet from home plate.

Birding

From Page 1

ing advantage of the region's natural beauty and wildlife. To their knowledge, this weekend marks the first large-scale birding festival in South Dakota.

"We played around with the idea for a year," he said. "Then we just got the motivation to put this together."

But don't think the organizers are just winging it. Their efforts have soared since they intensified planning in February.

Cerny believes the festival may see small attendance this year but holds great potential. In fact, organizers already plan on making it an annual event.

"The Fort Randall Birding Festival has all the makings of a weekend event that holds something for everyone interested in birds found in or passing through the Great Lakes region of South Dakota," he said.

"The area boasts at least 322 species of birds, of which 164 are breeding species. Experts also tell us that in May, there will still be many migratory birds in the area."

The festival starts at 7 p.m. Friday at the Wagner National Guard Armory. After an overview of the weekend events, a talk on birds and birding in the Lake Andes and Fort Randall area will be given by David Swanson from the University of South Dakota biology department.

The evening will be capped off with a program on live raptors presented by personnel from the Black Hills Raptor Center. Four species of raptors will be included in the group of featured avian ambassadors.

On Saturday morning, Swanson will lead a guided field trip for birders at the Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge.

In the afternoon, Ricky Olson — one of South Dakota's top birders — will lead a gull and tern identification field trip and talk. The Red Lake Wildlife Production Area and Fort Randall Dam will be visited.

Saturday evening will feature a presentation and talk about bluebirds by David Jeffcoat, the Yankton County coordinator for Bluebirds Across Nebraska and South Dakota.

A whip-poor-will walk will also take place for the night owls starting from the city park in Pickstown.

Sunday morning will start at the Karl Mundt National Wildlife Refuge for a field trip guided by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS) personnel. Among other things, bald eagle viewing and nesting will be featured until noon when the festival officially ends.

Participants can also choose activities such as a tour of the Corps of Engineers welcome center and Fort Randall Dam at Pickstown.

Jeffcoat, the Yankton County coordinator, said the Fort Randall festival will provide a tremendous boost for both his bluebird organization and for the area's birding in general.

"This (festival) builds great awareness," he said. "These (bluebirds) are nesting birds, and their nesting habitat is no longer in existence. They rely on humans to support nesting."

The bluebird organization was started in the 1970s and has made a tremendous difference, Jeffcoat said.

"The main focus is to get nesting boxes out there and monitor what is going on," he said. "The bluebirds are coming back strong. Bluebirds

Across Nebraska has documented 20,000 fledglings, or birds that hatch and fly away, each year."

Birding interest has grown tremendously and remains strong, Jeffcoat said. "With the Ross's Gull at Yankton (last year), we had people come here from all over the United States," he said.

Swanson, the USD biologist, sees the Fort Randall Birding Festival stimulating greater interest in the pursuit.

"It should be a really fun time. I hope it is well attended and can get a number of people interested in birds and aware of the diversity of birds and birding opportunities in the area and in South Dakota in general," he said.

"The long-term goal, of course, is to get people interested in birds and conservation, so we can preserve these types of experiences for people into the future."

The Fort Randall Birding Festival has relied on a variety of individuals, agencies and sponsors, Cerny said.

"Organizing has been challenging," he said. "I'm not a bird expert, so I have relied on the expertise of the wildlife management people at the Lake Andes Refuge and also the Corps of Engineers in Pickstown. I also relied heavily on Ron Mabie of Pickstown, who is an avid birder and has been to numerous birding events."

Mabie pointed to the year-round birding attractions in the immediate area.

"My favorite birding locations in the area are Fort Randall Dam in the winter for unusual ducks and gulls, and the Lake Andes National Wildlife Refuge for spring and fall migrants," he said.

"These are great areas to bird and in the past several years have yielded such rarities as Yellow-billed Loon, Ross's Gull and Whooping Crane."

Cerny sees a number of benefits created by the Fort Randall festival besides increased birding awareness. The weekend will provide an economic boost and expose more people to the attractions of southern Charles Mix County, he said.

"We are incorporating the natural triangle area of the region," he said. "It's nice to have the field trips at Pickstown and Lake Andes and the night events at Wagner. All three cities can be part of it, and people can come through and see what they have to offer."

The birding festival could signal just the beginning of joint regional efforts, Cerny said.

"It would be neat down the line if we work together on this and other tourism-related projects," he said. "We would make a lot stronger (combined) effort."

Sponsors for the weekend events include: Wagner Chamber of Commerce, City of Wagner, City of Lake Andes, Town of Pickstown, Randall RC&D, Sioux Falls Bird Club, South Dakota Ornithologists Union, Bluebirds Across Nebraska and South Dakota, Fort Randall Casino, USDA-NRCS, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Great Lakes of South Dakota Tourism, South Dakota Game Fish and Parks, and Southeast South Dakota Tourism Association.

Registration will be taken through the Friday night and Saturday morning events. For more information, visit online at www.cityofwagner.org or call the Wagner Chamber of Commerce at (605) 384-3741.

Y E S F O R K I D S

Yes! for Kids

South Dakotans have always been leery of having outsiders bringing their agendas across our border and inserting them into our public discussions.

The people of Yankton are capable of solving their own problems without interference.

We are resourceful men and women or we wouldn't be here in the first place. We have a good sense of when we should do things on our own, and when we need to come together to do what only communities can accomplish. No one needs to cut our meat or interpret our information for us. We can do these things ourselves.

Who knows better ...

Yankton residents know better than anyone else how to deal with problems in our community.

We talk, we discuss, we even argue. We treat one another with respect for the person and the opinion. When there has been enough talking, we take a vote and abide by the result.

Then we go back to work, to church, and to the ball fields. When it's all over we are all still neighbors.

The opponents of the opt-out have hired Paul Dorr as their consultant. Yes! for Kids almost hired a consultant when we looked ahead and saw all the work that needed to be done.



Properly used, consultants can provide helpful ideas.

But there are other sorts of consultants. Some of them run dirty campaigns and spread misinformation. They attempt to smear reputations and intimidate opponents with threats of lawsuits. They come to town, quickly dump a load of their particular brand of manure, take their money and leave. The community gets to clean up after them.

We don't believe that Yankton likes dirty and name-calling campaigns, so we are not running one.

We have been here from the beginning of this campaign, and we will be here when it is over, living and working alongside the rest of the citizens of this fine city.

In Lewrockwell.com, a website that promotes anti-state and anti-public education, Paul Dorr writes an article called...

Why I Defeat Government School Bond Levies At The Ballot Box And Do It For A Profit

"Design a campaign whose primary effort is to neutralize their 'do it for the children' guilt trip. Once that is neutralized in the mind of the voter, it takes little additional effort for them to vote in the interests of their own pocket book."

The tactics the consultant has used in other communities are described by the Minnesota Association of School Administrators as the following:

- Skewing figures and creating mistrust in the school administration and board
- Using last minute advertising distorting information as factual
- Portraying kids as being from the school district in radio ads who were not even from the district
- Using mass mailings to discredit our local leaders and create mistrust
- Leaving a trail of divided communities with no apparent remorse.

Paid for by Yes! for Kids, Kyle Repp, Treasurer