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SPORTS

Remembering '57

Former all-star catcher Del Crandall of Brea takes part in a celebration honoring the 1957 World Champion Milwaukee Braves.

By LOU PONSI STAFF WRITER

Former Major League catcher Del Crandall, 77, recalls every detail of the proudest moment of his career.

The date was Oct. 10, 1957. The place: Yankee Stadium. The situation: two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning of Game-7 of the World Series.

The Yankees have the bases loaded. Moose Skowron hits a ground ball to Eddie Mathews at third. Mathews back hands the ball, and then steps on third for the final out of the game and the series.

Pitcher Lew Burdette, who notched his third victory of the series, Mathews, and Crandall, hugged between the third base line and the mound.

"That's my vivid memory of the '57 World Series," said Crandall from his home in Brea. "The three of us jumping up and down ... that's the picture that is in my mind the most, winning the seventh game of the World Series in Yankee Stadium."

Crandall, who caught every inning of the series, hit a homerun in the eighth inning of the deciding game.

The eight-time all-star and four-time Gold Glove winner is one of 17 of the 23 living members of the '57 World Championship Braves team that will be in Milwaukee Friday and Saturday to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the championship.

"We weren't given much of a chance," said Crandall, recalling the series. "When you sum the club up, I think you have to put talent number one, but number two, was the way that we played. We really played hard.

"Mathews was our leader. He was just tough and all of us just took it from him."

While Crandall appreciates the memory of the '57 Braves being kept alive, he said going back to Milwaukee for the celebration is bitter-sweet.

"It's kind of mixed for me," he said. "It's is great to celebrate it but Mathews , (Joe) Adcock, (Warren) Spahn, Burdette and (Bob) Buhl are gone, so it is with mixed feelings that you go to something like this."

Crandall played in the big leagues from 1949 through 1966 and had stints managing the Milwaukee Brewers (1972-75) and Seattle Mariners (1983-84).

The former catcher also managed the Albuquerque Dukes, a AAA affiliate of the Dodgers and was one of Mike Scioscia's catching instructors.

Crandall was 6 when his family moved to Fullerton. He remembers watching ball games at Fullerton's Amerige

Park and then playing there.

He became a catcher when nobody else on his team at Maple Elementary School wanted to take the position.

After playing four years at Fullerton High, Crandall graduated in June, 1947 and then signed his first professional contract in September.

Crandall said he earned \$6,000 his first season in the majors. His highest salary was \$42,000.

Money aside, Crandall recalls the conditions in club houses, even in major league ballparks, anything but luxurious during the 1950s.

"We interested in getting another shower head in Philadelphia or getting seat cushions put on the bench in Cincinnati," Crandall said. "You couldn't get barefoot a lot of times in the clubhouse because there were hard wood floors and because of the cleats you could get splinters.

"But, hey, it was the big leagues and who could complain about playing in the big leagues."

Crandall has been married 56 years, has six children and 11 grandchildren. He said he still watches as much baseball as possible, mostly on TV. Occasionally, he'll get to Angel Stadium.

"I've been in baseball for about 54 years," he said. "It's just in my blood. I love the game."



YOUNG BRAVE: Del Crandall, a member of the 1957 MLB champ Atlanta Braves, talks to reporter Lou Ponsi showing off a photo of himself as a 17-year-old Fullerton High School baseball player. The picture on the wall is of a Milwaukee player.

Crandall

Age: 77

Hometown: Brea; grew up in Fullerton

Baseball career: eight-time all star and four-time gold glove catcher during his 17-year playing career; member of the Milwaukee Braves 1957 World Championship team; stints managing the Milwaukee Brewers and Seattle Mariners

Family: married to Fran for 56 years; six children; 11 grandchildren