



# Cecil Edward Espy

SEP 6, 1935 - NOV 16, 2017



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## **Cecil Edward Espy**

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**B**orn in San Diego, California, on September 6, 1935, Cecil Espy was born to proud parents Electra Armstrong Espy and Otis Espy. Cecil was the youngest of six children; his brothers Otis, Billy, Harold and Luther and sister Jean. He attended Logan Elementary School, Memorial Jr. High and graduated from San Diego High School in 1954. While attending high school, Cecil was an outstanding varsity athlete, lettering in football. After graduating from SDHS, he joined the U.S. Army on September 27, 1954 for two years and left with an honorable discharge August 30, 1956. During his service in the Army, Cecil's love affair with baseball began as he played baseball for the Army. That relationship with America's pastime became a center piece of Cecil's life. After the Army, Cecil returned to San Diego and married his high school sweetheart Lola Mae Russell. They had two children Rhonda Kay Espy and Cecil Edward Espy, Jr. As a young man, Cecil worked hard to support his new family. At age 19, Cecil began working as a machinist at North Island Naval Air Station where he learned how to build quality products and develop great people. Known for his straight talk ("Say what you mean and mean what you say") and his fairness Cecil ultimately became the head of the Machinist Union while at North Island where he served until his retirement in 1995. But even while Cecil was building his career at North Island, his love for baseball continued to grow. In 1962, he graduated from umpire school conducted by the San Diego Baseball Association. His goal: to become a major league umpire. But God put Cecil on a slightly different path. During the same time that Cecil was building his career as an umpire, his wife Lola became ill and was receiving kidney dialysis. Regardless of the successes Cecil was having, he knew that his first role was as a father. Cecil decided to umpire at the high school and collegiate levels so he could stay near his family. For the average man, this might have been the end of the story but not for Big C. He might have been calling balls and strikes for high schools and colleges but his professionalism,



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his absolute control of the game, and his fierce presence on the ball field gained the notice of Major League Baseball. In 1979, he was offered a scouting position with the St. Louis Cardinals which he gladly accepted. During his scouting career, Cecil would often be found driving up and down California in his red Volkswagen, looking for promising talent. The sight of six-foot five Big C climbing out of his chug-a-lug Bug was a sight seen at many a ball field. Cecil had a keen eye for talent and he scouted numerous players who later went on to play in the major leagues: Bobby Meacham and Mark Davis to name a couple. In time he became one of the most recognized scouts in the National League. His story is one of only 19 interviews published in one of the first books about baseball scouts, *Eye for Talent: Interviews with Veteran Baseball Scouts*. Cecil then decided to strike out in a new direction and he moved to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Cecil spent nearly 15 years in the land of Pelé, samba and Ipanema beach, ultimately earning dual citizenship and making Rio his second home. Oh, the stories Big “C” would share with his boys. After selling his home in Rio de Janeiro, he returned to San Diego in 2013 so he could attend the football games of his youngest grandson Da’Rhon. The constant teacher, Cecil would be found coaching on the sidelines, always giving that extra advice. But what is the measure of a life well lived? It’s the memories of the people you touched. What are some of our memories of Big C? We will miss Cecil walking into a room saying loudly “I wanna know?” We will miss his tough love saying, “You make your bed, you lie in it.” We will miss his coaching, telling us to “Look people in the eye and have a strong handshake.” Oh yes, and if you ever shook Cecil’s hand, you will miss the pain that followed that warm greeting. But most of all, we will miss a man who knew who he was – something you don’t find a lot of these days. Cecil’s battle with cancer began in January 2016. During his long journey home, Rhonda and Cecil Jr. were constantly by his side. Cecil fought a hard fight and gave everybody who cared for him a hard way to go. If you weren’t picking weeds in the garden, you were adding water to the waterfalls. He would beat his sister Jean in dominoes, and if you didn’t know how many spots are on the dominoes, you could not play with him. What we will cherish are the stories he told, the times we got fussed at, and the lessons we learned all re-sulting in a greater appreciation for the man. Whether to friends, kids,



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or caretakers, Cecil's fabulous stories provided life lessons that ultimately led us to have the greatest respect for the man and loving him so much more. He is preceded in death by his first wife, Lola Mae Russell Espy; his third wife, Frances Perkins Espy; his father, Otis Espy; his mother, Electra Armstrong-Espy; and his brothers, Otis Espy, Billy Espy, Luther Espy, and Harold Espy. He leaves behind his sister, Norma Jean Moore; his daughter, Rhonda Kay Espy-Chick (Michal Chick); his son, Cecil Espy Jr. (Tracie Fore-Espy); his stepdaughter, Carol Perkins; his grandchildren, Prinz Milton (Samantha Milton), Dominique Espy, Ashley Espy, Da'Rhon Yarbrough, Michael Fore, Lamance Lynch, Brandy Titus, & Jamal Keller; and his great-grandchildren, Isaiah, DeVaya, Makayla, Logan, Elijah, Maddox, and Ariella.



## Tribute Wall

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AH

**Anna, Vernon And Brandon Hirsch** posted:

Mr. Espy fought a good fight. May he be remembered as a loving person and a great father. He will be missed by many but he will never be forgotten. May his Soul and all the Souls of the faithfully departed rest in peace. Heaven has gained another Angel.

November 28 at 12:54 PM

SM

**Sara Miller** posted:

My late husband Bill Miller and I are so sorry for your loss. Cecil was such a constant part of San Diego County baseball He will always be a part of the baseball history here, especially for the high school students from the past, including the scouting family, including my husband Bill and our son, Billy jr. who both knew Cecil senior and Cecil jr for many years.. Peace to you all Sara Miller, widow of Bill Scout w/Cleveland Indians

November 26 at 11:49 AM

CE

**Colleen Espy(Late William R Espy)** posted:

SENDING MY CONDOLENCES AND PRAYERS TO THE FAMILY.

November 22 at 1:45 AM



# Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Cecil by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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