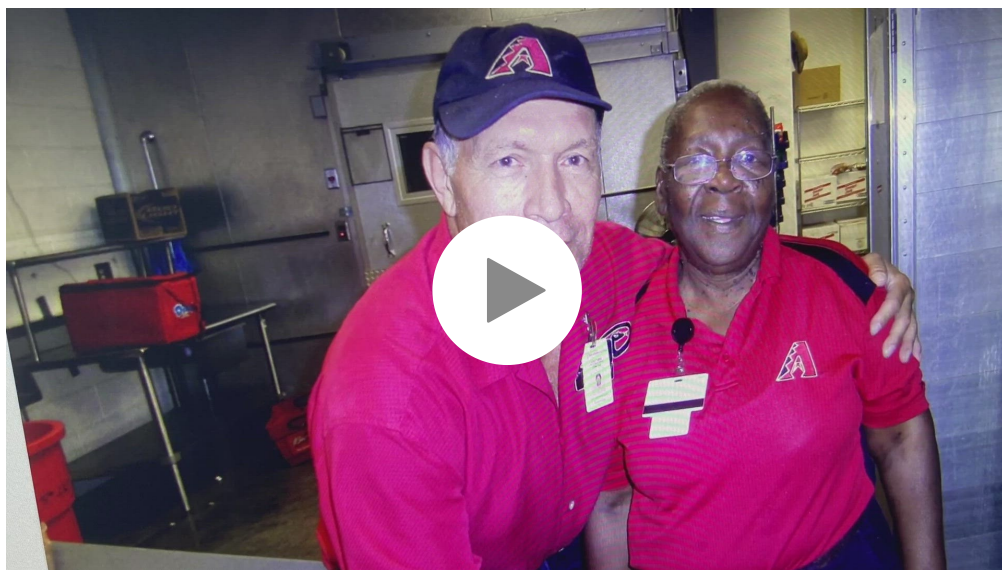


DIAMONDBACKS

'He encouraged me to never give up': Beloved Valley beer vendor dies after battle with cancer

Ray Delgado was a popular and familiar face among fans at spring training and Diamondbacks season games.



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PHOENIX — A popular figure in the Valley baseball community has died after a heart attack in 2021 and a subsequent battle with cancer.

[Ray Delgado](#) of Mesa was 73 years old.

Growing up in the Bronx, Delgado dreamed of playing for the New York Yankees.

“He practiced, practiced, practiced,” said his brother, Steve. “One thing led to another and he didn’t make it.”

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Getting back to the baseball stadium

Delgado found another way to enjoy America's pastime. After spending years in the careers of manufacturing and construction, Delgado landed a side job in the 1990s as a beer vendor at sporting events in Phoenix.

"It helped him stay close to the game of baseball," said Melanie Delgado, Ray's wife. "For many years, he was up and down those stands and it took its toll."

Delgado relied on ibuprofen and energy drinks to keep working as he entered his 60s and 70s, his brother said. Ray was a popular and familiar face among fans at spring training and Diamondbacks season games.

"You just smiled when he said something to you," said Vanessa Ramirez, an in-game host for the Diamondbacks and employee of 12News. "When he was around, it was so much energy."

Ray's passion for sports, especially baseball, is reflected in scrapbooks he curated containing autographs, ticket stubs, vendor passes and newspaper articles dating back to the 90s.

Last week Delgado was days from passing away. Angels team owner Arte Moreno personally visited him at a Phoenix hospital.

"Ray's eyes just lit up when he saw Arte. I hadn't seen him that way for days," Melanie said.

Inspiring his wife to pursue her dreams

Delgado inspired his wife to get a college degree before he got sick and used money earned from the ballpark to partially pay for expenses.

When Melanie considered quitting school, it was appropriate that Ray, a die-hard baseball fan, used a baseball movie quote to motivate her.

"And he said to me there is a movie, 'A League of her Own,' and the coach said, 'If it was easy, everybody would be doing it. It's hard because it's great,'" Melanie said. She said that conversation inspired her to keep going.

Melanie has since been named an honor student at Mesa Community College. She is working to earn a degree in social work and counseling.



“He encouraged me to never give up,” Melanie said.

Witnessing Game 7

One of Ray’s most memorable games as a vendor was witnessing game seven of the World Series at Chase Field. Although Ray was a childhood Yankees fan, he had converted to the Diamondbacks.

Beer sales ended after the 7th inning. Ray was able to see the game-winning hit from a stadium tunnel.

The family has set up a [GoFundMe account](#) for funeral expenses and future expenses facing Melanie while she continues another year-and-a-half of school.

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