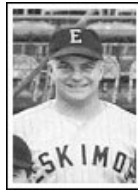




News

Biography of Kenneth Grant Heffel

Taken from wikipedia



Ken Heffel caught in the Big State League in 1954 and the Florida State League in 1955. He also played with Edmonton and Calgary in the independent ManDak League in the mid 50s. As an Edmonton teenager he so impressed the Cincinnati Reds that they signed him to a pro-baseball contract. More intrigued with business than sport, he started a welding company with four men, turned in to giant Great West Steel Industries Ltd., and was a millionaire before he hit 40. By then he had established himself as a successful rancher and breeder of champion Herefords. He had also developed a passion of art and subsequently became one of the most respected gallery owners in the country, swinging multi-million-dollar deals that left rivals shaking their heads. The West's art and business communities were stunned to learn that the talented Vancouver-based entrepreneur had made his last deal. Kenneth Grant Heffel was dead of a heart attack at age 53."

The adopted son of baker Archibald Heffel and his wife Mildred, young Ken grew up in a modest two-story stucco house on Edmonton's 72 Avenue. A gifted student as well as standout athlete in hockey and football at University High School, he particularly excelled at baseball. Not large for a catcher, at five feet nine inches, he was tough, recalls Edward John, now of Kelowna, who was a teammate on the Army and Navy Cardinals. He remembers Rollie Miles, later a star running back with the Edmonton Eskimos, once streaking towards home plate, which Ken was guarding: "Miles expected no trouble from Heffel, but he wound up sitting on his butt."

In 1954 the Reds assigned the promising prospect to their Daytona Beach Islanders farm team. He played two seasons, but had trouble hitting curve balls. Not content to spend his baseball life in the minor leagues, Heffel returned to Edmonton, married his high school sweetheart Marjorie Thompson, and joined the accounting department of C.W. Currie (later Canron) Limited steel fabrication plant. At night he studied economics at the University of Alberta. Although he never did finish his degree, he won a gold medal for scoring the highest marks in accountancy.

Rising to become Canron's prairie regional controller by the early '60s, he had begun to buy paintings from local galleries. In 1965 Mr. Heffel recruited four colleagues and took out a \$42,000 personal bank loan and a \$65,000 line of credit to start his own welding shop, Great West Steel Industries (GWS). It became the first western maker of welded-steel roof trusses and, taking over bankrupt fabrication plants, set up shops in Calgary, Saskatoon and Vancouver.

Soon Mr. Heffel was flying all over the world making deals. In 1970, he moved family and head office to Vancouver. The company went public and expanded to Toronto and Los Angeles. A tough negotiator, Heffel scored one of his biggest triumphs with West Germany's Krupp Industries. It always sought a majority interest in partnerships, but paid \$4 million for an unprecedented 50-50 split and second billing in GWS-Krupp Industries to supply equipment to Syncrude's oil sands plant. (Western Report, November 2, 1987)



Front row: Jimmy Monahan (bat boy). Middle row : Dale Zeigler P, Phil Oyler OF, Bob Henrich SS, Tom Shollin C, Wayne Tucker MGR, 2B, Owen Skousen P, Bob Jones P, Don Kirk P, Art Bull P. Back row : Cecil "Tiger" Goldstick Trainer, Ken Heffel C, Eddie Bertotti U, Carl Maggio OF, Gary LaComb OF, Ken Guffey 1B, Bob Gerst 3B, Cy Ing 2B, John Doucette P, John Ducey General Manager.

For more information contact:

David Heffel or Robert Heffel

Toll Free: 1 800 528-9608

Telephone: 604 732-6505

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