

# Local couple completes tour of ballparks

By **BOB CROSEN**

Jersey County journal

A Jerseyville couple completed a tour of which most only dream when they visited Marlins Park in Miami, capping a tour of every Major League baseball park in the nation over the course of 30 years.

Kent Miller and his wife, Brenda, began their tour in 1984 when they went to a game with his brother and sister-in-law at Candlestick Park in San Francisco. The two loved to travel and as they continued to visit cities throughout the U.S., he said they kept going to baseball games at the different parks.

"Obviously not a very original idea, but I had a real love for travel and we just started taking these trips," the retired construction supervisor for Illinois Department of Natural Resources said. "It's about that simple, really."

The two would look through the St. Louis Post-Dispatch on Sundays for discounted air rates throughout the year and plan trips to different locations. He said they were lucky in attending games at some of the ballparks as other visitors or residents would give them free tickets to games. One such instance resulted in tickets nine rows behind the Cardinals dugout at a game in Houston.

Although the St. Louis Cardinals have been the couple's favorite team throughout the years, he said the trips didn't always align with a Cardinals game, which afforded them an opportunity to see a variety of teams.

From the old Candlestick to the new AT&T Park, and even the old Sportsman Park, Kent has been to 54 stadiums and Brenda has visited 51.

He couldn't think of a bad experience in all the years they spent visiting the parks. In fact, he relayed humbling experiences regarding professional players and the communities they visited.

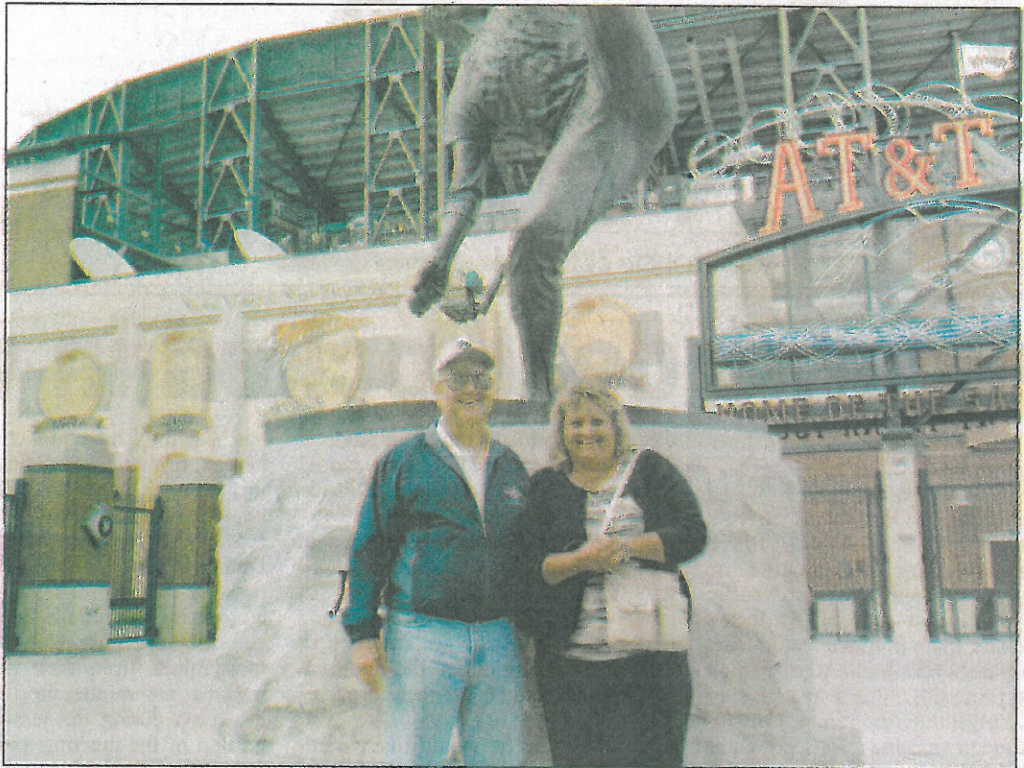
"I really don't have one bad or negative story I could tell you about. We met the nicest people," Miller said. "Two different times, once at the old Astro Dome and another time at San Francisco at Candlestick, they gave us tickets. I'm not talking about nose bleeds."

He said they went to spring training one year when they saw Tito Landrum speaking with fans and signing autographs. A mother and her grandchild were next in line, but their visit was cut short when he had to go out onto the field for fielding practice at Tinker Field in Orlando, Fla.

Miller said the player told the two to stick around so he could talk to them after the game, and when he returned – to a much larger crowd of people – he brought them to the front of the line.

That professionalism and courtesy to fans, he said, was something he has admired since he saw it.

"They, of course, were inadvertently pushed back and back," Miller said. "He made them all get out of the way. He didn't just come up and give an autograph, he talked to this lady and thanked her for coming out. I thought it was one



Submitted photo

**Kent and Brenda Miller stand outside AT&T Park in San Francisco. The couple visited ballparks throughout the last 30 years and completed the tour this fall in Miami. Kent has been to 54 parks while Brenda has been to 51.**

of the neatest things I had ever seen."

By 1997, Miller said they had visited every ball park in the country at the time. He said the oldest parks, Fenway Park and Wrigley Field,

Miller's brother, who would listen to games on a transistor radio so he wouldn't miss a minute.

Miller said he and his wife don't claim to be the most involved or passionate baseball fans.

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**Kent Miller**

*Jerseyville resident*

were among his favorites because of their history.

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The achievement of a full tour was quickly challenged with the construction of new stadiums where they began to attend games to keep alive the tradition that would not have begun without

Instead, Miller reserves that right for his brother and others who remember the finest details of games.

"I'm not even the best baseball fan in my family. That would have been my brother," Miller said. "My brother was the one who had the true love for baseball. He was my older brother by three years, and I wanted to be like my brother."

He and his wife will continue to attend games, he said, and as new stadiums are built, you can bet those parks will be on the list of locations to visit during the next trip.