Joseph Vulich, umpired for 50 years

Joseph F. Vulich 1922-2006 Survivors: wife, Rose A.; son, Joseph F. Jr. ; daughter, Rosanne Lewicki; a sister; and two grandchildren. Services: 10 a.m. Monday, St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church, 4217 Bluestone Road, South Euclid. Contributions: Hospice of the Western Reserve, 300 East 185th St., Cleveland, Ohio 44119. Arrangements: Schulte & Mahon-Murphy Funeral Home, 5252 Mayfield Road, Lyndhurst.

Joe Vulich, 84, a fixture around the sandlots and baseball diamonds of Greater Cleveland who was inducted into the Greater Cleveland Slo Pitch Hall of Fame, died July 19 at the Hospice of the Western Reserve in Cleveland.

Services are Monday.

Although he never learned to drive a car, Vulich was known to be a driving force in the game. His wife, Rose, drove him to the games.

He umpired for more than 50 years as a member of the Cleveland Umpires Association, often officiating at 14 games a week, even well into his 70s. He was a fast-pitch catcher, and though his playing days ended at age 26, his love for the game continued.

Introduced to umpiring by a friend, Joe Raymond, in 1946, Vulich passed the test in 1948 and had officiated ever since. He umpired three world championship tournaments.

"I just love the game, always have," Vulich said in an earlier interview with a Plain Dealer reporter. "Pitching is the mainstay in baseball. It always has been."

He once said the keys to being a good umpire were consistency and an even temper.

Vulich officiated at Class A baseball games at Gordon Park and at St. Clair Slow Pitch and for the Catholic Youth Organization. He was a regular at many high school games, officiating at sectional championships in Lakewood.

Born in Collinwood, he attended St. Jerome School in Cleveland. He and his wife lived in South Euclid for 54 years. He served in the Army in Europe during World War II and worked as an expediter for TRW Inc. in Cleveland for more than 47 years.



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