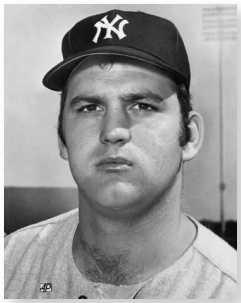
Thurman Munson

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Tragic End to Bright Baseball Life

by Lori Hahn



Thurman Munson
(1947-1979)

Thurman Munson was the fourth and final child of truck driver and WWII vet Darrell Munson and his wife Ruth Smylie came into the world on 07 Jun 1947 in Akron, OH.

His older brother Duane taught him to play baseball, but the natural athlete was captain of his Canton high school baseball, basketball, and football teams.

He was all-city and all-state in all three sports. He won a scholarship and attended Kent State University. He spent two summers playing in the Cape Cod League (college ball, sanctioned by the NCAA). In 1969, he was drafted by the New York Yankees and was Rookie of the Year in 1970.

His career was simply amazing. Playing short stop and then catcher, Munson was an American League Rookie of the Year, an AL MVP, a seven-time All-Star and a two-time World Series champion. In 1976, Munson was named Captain of the Yankees—its first captain since Lou Gehrig. He spent 11 seasons with the Yankees.

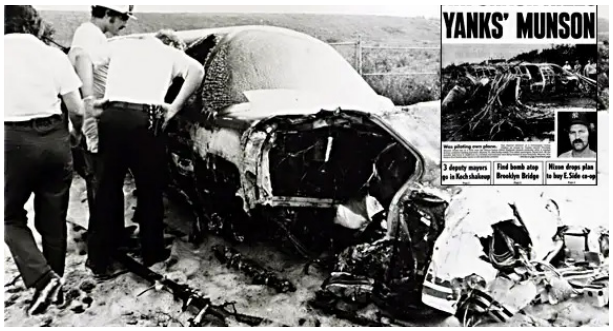
The 1970s was the golden age of the Yankees with three consecutive World Series. Bombastic owner George Steinbrenner took over in 1972. This was the Yankees of Reggie Jackson—whom Munson tagged as "Mr. October." It was the Yankees of Graig Nettles, Willie Randolph, and Mickey Rivers.



Munson was a family guy. He married his childhood sweetheart, Diana Dominick, in 1968. They had two daughters, Tracy and Kelly, and a son, Michael.

Munson took up flying in 1978. On August 2, 1979, he decided to go up with two of his friends to do few touch-and-go landings and takeoffs. On their fourth landing, Munson made some critical errors, and the plane crashed. His passengers survived the crash and fire.

Munson, his back broken, could not get out of the plane and died of asphyxiation due to the toxic fumes as the plane burned. His Yankee's number, 15, was retired that season.



Published 01 Mar 2025