

Mike Ryan Collection, 1966-1997

Collection Summary

Reference Code:	MRQ, US.
Repository:	Special Collections, Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Massachusetts.
Call Number:	MSS 35
Creator:	Haverhill Public Library
Title:	Mike Ryan Collection, 1966-1997
Dates:	1966-1997
Size:	2 linear feet (3 boxes)
Language(s):	Collection materials are in English.
Abstract:	This collection contains objects, photographs, and newspaper clippings about Mike Ryan, a Major League baseball player.

Biographical History

Michael James Ryan was born on 25 November 1941, in Haverhill, Massachusetts, the son of John Ryan and Lorraine Ryan. John Ryan “worked as a foreman at a shoe factory in Haverhill owned by his brother Dan Ryan. Lorraine Ryan was a homemaker.”¹ Ryan was the oldest of six siblings (five brothers and a sister) and came from an athletic family. His father was a tackle who nearly made the Boston Yanks of the National Football League and “His grandfather’s cousin, Jack Ryan, had been a major-league ballplayer, breaking in with Louisville of the old American Association in 1889. Jack Ryan later caught for the National League Boston Beaneaters from 1894 through 1896, and finished his playing career with the Washington Senators, appearing in one game in each of the 1912 and 1913 seasons”² In addition, Paul Ryan, Ryan’s uncle, was a minor league A ball pitcher.

At an early age Ryan was interested in baseball. He went to see the Boston Braves play several times and, when they left, he rooted for the Red Sox. Although his high school did not have a baseball team, he did play “in the Northeast League, an amateur league that consisted of teams located in Seabrook, New Hampshire and the Massachusetts communities of Newburyport, Amesbury, Salisbury, and Haverhill. He was a top player, and was one of the three New England players named to the Hearst sandlot team which played its 15th annual game at Yankee Stadium

¹ Dave Williams, “Mike Ryan,” Society for American Baseball Research (admin/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/sabr_logo.png, July 11, 2020), <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/Mike-ryan-2/>.

² Williams, “Mike Ryan”.

on August 18, 1960.”³ At the game, the Philadelphia Phillies saw Ryan’s potential and brought him to Milford, Connecticut, to try out for the team; he did not do well and was not signed. Boston Red Sox scouts, Larry Woodall and Fred Maguire, took an interest in Ryan and he would sign with the Boston Red Sox at the age of 18 for the sum of \$5,000.

In 1961 he was playing for the Olean of the New York-Penn League where he did well on defense, but struggled on offense. In 119 at bats he hit .185, and in 1962, while playing for Waterloo, he led the Midwest League’s catchers in putouts, assists, and tied for the lead in double plays. While playing in Reading, over the next two years, he led the Eastern League catchers in fielding average and double plays in 1964 for Reading while being named to the All-Star team.⁴ Ryan’s big break came on Saturday, October 3, 1964, when he made his major league debut.

In the game Bill Monbouquette was the pitcher with Ryan as catcher. He would go 1 for 3 in the game and had two runs batted in. Ryan grounded “out to third base to lead off the second inning, Ryan singled in the third, driving in both Frank Malzone and Al Smith. Ryan reached on an error in the fifth, and he was walked intentionally in the sixth. As Steve Ridzik threw a wild pitch and Ken Retzer threw the ball wildly into center field, Ryan motored all the way around from first to home, but was tagged out at the plate trying to score. Unfortunately, he tore a ligament in his knee in the collision at the plate.”⁵

Ryan spent the next several years going back and forth between the majors and minor leagues, but after 1965, Ryan would not be sent back down to the minors again. For the 1966 season, “he won the starting catcher’s job and appeared in 116 games for the Red Sox batting .214. He managed two three-hit games that year, but just two home runs and some 32 RBIs. Bob Tillman served as the backup backstop.”⁵ 1967 was a tough year because there was not a starting catcher. Ryan would lose his starting position. Despite the setback he married Suzanne Graham of Newburyport, Massachusetts. Mary was a good match for Ryan because they loved sports and being active. Mary “enjoyed scuba diving, skiing, roller skating, as well as collecting antiques. They were introduced by a mutual friend while Suzanne was working as a secretary with Western Electric in 1964. After their honeymoon in Antigua, Jamaica, and the British West Indies, they moved into an old colonial home in Kingston, New Hampshire.”⁶

The Phillies acquired Ryan and he served mostly as a backup. Ryan’s best year was 1969; he hit 12 homers and had 44 RBIs, but his average was still just .204 in 133 games.⁷

After he retired from playing, Ryan coached for the Pittsburgh Pirates’ minor league team in Charleston from 1975 to 1976. Afterwards he returned to the Phillies and was their “minor-league catching instructor for 1977, and midway through the summer, he was asked to manage their Triple-A club in the American Association at Oklahoma City, beginning in July. Oklahoma

³ Williams, “Mike Ryan.”

⁴ Williams, “Mike Ryan.”

⁵ Williams, “Mike Ryan.”

⁶ Williams, “Mike Ryan.”

⁷ Williams, “Mike Ryan.”

City finished third that season with a 70-66 record.”⁸ Later he served as the Phillies bullpen coach from 1980 to 1995. After the 1995 season, Ryan retired from baseball for good.

Ryan holds the record for having one of the lowest batting averages for a major league baseball player at .193; despite this his defense was excellent. With just over 5,000 innings of work, given a total of 3,832 chances, he made just 34 errors a career percentage of .991.”⁹ After his baseball career ended, he lived in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire. On 7 July 2020, at the age of 78, Ryan died in his sleep.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains objects, photographs, and newspaper clippings about Mike Ryan, a Major League baseball player. There are two series in this collection. Series one includes Ryan’s Philadelphia Phillies jersey and hat. Series two consists of a photograph of Ryan in his Boston Red Sox uniform and catching gear and six snapshots of Ryan making a hit. Series three includes a set of newspaper clippings and a special issue from the *Haverhill Gazette* from 1995.

Arrangement

Series 1: Objects, undated [1968-1973]

Series 2: Photographs, 1966, undated

Series 3: Newspaper Clippings, 1971, 1992-1997

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation:	[Item Identification], Mike Ryan Collection, 1966-1997, <i>Reference Code</i> , Special Collections, Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Massachusetts.
Custodial History:	Unknown
Acquisition Information:	Found in collection
Processing Information:	Processed by Erik R. Bauer, 2020. Updated by Tamara Gaydos, 2021. Updated by Elizabeth Smith, 2025.
Access Rights:	Collection is open for research.
Phys. Access Restrictions:	None.
Tech. Access Restrictions:	None.
Copyright:	Copyright has not been assigned to the Haverhill Public Library. All requests for permission to publish or quote from manuscripts

⁸ Williams, “Mike Ryan.”

⁹ Williams, “Mike Ryan.”

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Related Material: None
Separated Material: None.
Conservation Notes: Jersey is wrapped in acid-free paper and baseball cap is stuffed with unbuffered paper to keep its shape.
Subjects: Baseball coaches
 Baseball players
 Boston Red Sox (Baseball team)
 Boston Red Sox (Baseball team)—People
 Catchers (Baseball)
 Philadelphia Phillies (Baseball team)
 Philadelphia Phillies (Baseball team)--Employees
 Philadelphia Phillies (Baseball team)--People
 Pittsburgh Pirates (Baseball team)
 Pittsburgh Pirates (Baseball team)--People
 Ryan, Michael J., 1941-2020

Collection Inventory

Series 1: Objects, undated [1968-1973]

<u>Folder Title</u>	<u>Container Number</u>	<u>Folder Number</u>
Philadelphia Phillies No. 9 Jersey, undated [1968-1973]	1(OS)	
Philadelphia Phillies Baseball hat, undated [1968-1973]	2	

Series 2: Photographs, 1966, undated

Signed photograph in Red Sox uniform, undated [1964-1967]	3	1
Six snapshots of Ryan "getting a hit" at Fenway Park, 1966	3	2

Series 3: Newspaper Clippings, 1971, 1992-1997

<u>Folder Title</u>	<u>Container Number</u>	<u>Folder Number</u>
Special Issue in the <i>Haverhill Gazette</i> [2 copies], 1995	3	3
Newspaper Clippings, 1971, 1992-1997	3	4