

Former Mets player blessed to attend 1986 reunion for unusual reason



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The Mets' 1986 season provided Ed Hearn with three of the best things in his life: a World Series championship ring, a platform and, most importantly, his wife, Tricia.

After one of the biggest highs in a baseball career, the Mets reserve catcher, who backed up Gary Carter, had no idea the challenges that lay ahead.

Since his career ended, Hearn has undergone four lifesaving kidney transplants and multiple bouts with squamous cell carcinoma leading him to have his left ear removed.

"It ain't been easy, but I believe God had this plan for me," Hearn said.



It is safe to say that Hearn had one of the toughest journeys on the way to the Mets celebrating their 40th anniversary of the World Series crown on Saturday at Citi Field. But the 65-year-old, who now lives in Kansas, is most excited that he will be able to share the event with his wife, who has been by his side through all of his trials and tribulations.

In Hearn's mind, his opportunity to reconvene comes down to a simple decision back in 1986.

Hearn was a rookie for the Mets, who finally broke through after parts of seven successful seasons in the minor leagues, having won three consecutive titles at three different levels. With the Mets in 1986, he appeared in 49 games and batted .265 with four home runs, 10 RBI and 16 runs.

In the fall of that year, Mets left-hander Randy Niemann wanted to set up Hearn with one of the nurses who had helped his wife give birth. Initially, Hearn shook the idea off. But a few days later, as Ray Knight was hosting an event for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation at Shea Stadium, Hearn was invited by the Mets third baseman to attend.



Hearn made what turned out to be a fateful decision. A young girl with cystic fibrosis hopped on his lap at the event, and her mom asked if he could sign a ticket stub for a nurse back at the hospital - the same one that Niemann tried to set him up with.



The Florida native knew to approach the fast-moving city girls with caution, but he sent along his number to the Long Islander and the rest was history.

"That was the beginning," Hearn said. "I wouldn't be here having this conversation with you if that hadn't happened."

Hearn was traded to the Royals before the 1987 season in a deal that sent David Cone back to the Mets. After trying to impress George Brett and Jim Sundberg with his arm, the overall wear and tear led to Hearn requiring shoulder surgery. Hearn would ask Tricia to marry him after the procedure.

Tricia was by Hearn's side as he was on dialysis and received his first kidney transplant in 1992. Hearn admitted he was not in a good place mentally after that but received his first speaking engagement around two years later.

That was where Hearn found his purpose beyond the baseball diamond.

The tenor of Hearn's discussions began to change after the turn of the century and following a second kidney transplant in 2000. His story was no longer solely built around his determination in making the major leagues and triumphing on the grandest stage but overcoming the immense obstacles that might come anyone's way.

And he always thought back to the little girl with cystic fibrosis, whose life expectancy did not stretch much past 18 years old, back on that momentous day in 1986.

"How do you get perspective? You go out there and do something for somebody else," Hearn said. "You always find somebody worse off than you are and it always comes back to you. You gotta think outside the self."

Hearn said that his public speaking career, which includes receiving the Certified Speaking Professional designation from the National Speakers Association, has given him fuel to weather the numerous health challenges that have been thrust his way.



Hearn's third kidney transplant was the most successful in 2002 and allowed him to spread his positive message for more than two decades. His faith, which began with his upbringing in Florida, course through his message.

When Hearn's son, Cody was diagnosed with stage 3 Burkitt's non-Hodgkin lymphoma, Tricia was there again.

"For all those years, I used to think Trish was the third wheel between Cody and I because we were always going somewhere, fishing and hunting and golfing, and she wasn't involved," Hearn said. "But when that boy got sick, I got one night in the hospital with him and other than that, she was there right on top of him all the time."

COVID and Hearn's delicate state have cut into his chances to share.

A little less than two years ago in October 2024, it looked like Hearn might not live to see the Mets' 40th anniversary. Amid a lengthy hospital stay with a bacterial gut condition, the former catcher went into cardiac arrest. Luckily, his wife, the nurse, was at his side and able to spring into action.

Hearn was revived twice and back in strong spirits one day later.



"Without her, I wouldn't be here," Hearn said. "It's a wonderful story that transcends, in my mind, even the World Series because for me, my journey has been tough, really, really tough."

On Saturday, Hearn will be back in Flushing and able to reminisce on all that has happened over the last 40 years - the good and the bad.

Hearn's life has been harder than most, but he knows others have had it worse. The blessings still persist.