

Aug. 19, 2019

--JIM HARDY, OLDEST LIVING USC AND L.A. RAMS FOOTBALL PLAYER, DIES

LOS ANGELES--Jim Hardy, the oldest living USC and Los Angeles Rams football player who was the MVP of the 1945 Rose Bowl, then set a still-standing unsought NFL passing record and served as the general manager of the Los Angeles Coliseum, died on Friday (Aug. 16) of natural causes at his home in La Quinta, Calif. He was 96.

Services will be private.

Hardy lettered three seasons (1942-44) at quarterback and defensive back for USC, starting his final two seasons and leading the Trojans to a pair of shutout Rose Bowl victories. He threw three touchdown passes against Washington in a 29-0 victory in the 1944 Rose Bowl, then passed for two TDs and ran for a third to earn MVP honors in a 25-0 win over Tennessee in the 1945 Rose Bowl. He led the Trojans in passing, total offense and punting both of those seasons and also in scoring in 1942. He captained USC as a 1944 senior while setting school season passing records for completions (58), yardage (739) and touchdowns (10) and earning All-Pacific Coast Conference honors. As a defensive back, he had 13 career interceptions.

He also played third base for the USC baseball team for three years (1944-46), earning All-California Intercollegiate Baseball Association honors in 1944 and helping the Trojans to the league title in 1946.

Hardy, who came to USC from Fairfax High in Los Angeles, was inducted into the USC Athletic Hall of Fame in 1999 and the Rose Bowl Hall of Fame in 1994.

The eighth pick in the first round of the 1945 NFL Draft by the Washington Redskins, he spent seven seasons as a quarterback in the NFL and threw for 5,690 yards with 54 TDs. After a stint in the Navy, he was with the Rams (1946-48), Chicago Cardinals (1949-51) and Detroit Lions (1952). He was a member of the inaugural Los Angeles Rams team in 1946 and the NFL champion Lions in 1952. He was named to the Pro Bowl in 1950. While with the Cardinals, he set an NFL game record by throwing eight interceptions against the Philadelphia Eagles in 1950, a mark that has yet to be broken. The following week against the Baltimore Colts, he rebounded to throw six TDs.

After a business career, he was the general manager of the ABA's Los Angeles Stars (1969-70) and then held a similar title at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum (1973-86), including when the Coliseum hosted the 1984 Summer Olympics.

Hardy was a lifelong USC football fan who saw his first Trojan game in 1931 at age eight and attended nearly every home game since then (except when he was in the NFL). He was so devoted that, until two years ago, he would drive himself two hours from the desert to USC once a week in the fall to watch the Trojans practice. He also attended more than 80 Rose Bowl games, including all but the first two of USC's 34 Rose Bowl appearances.

He is survived by his wife of 74 years, Henrietta (they met while students at USC), as well as daughters Cindy Aivalis (Jim), Ellen Hardy (Frank Butler) and K. Maria Hardy and son Danny Hardy, plus grandson Ryan Aivalis. He was predeceased by his son James Hardy. His late brother, Don, played end for the Trojans in the mid-1940s and was drafted by the Rams in football and the Cleveland Indians in baseball.