

## Royally dedicated to the boys in blue

For more than two decades, Lawrence woman has been a fixture at Kauffman Stadium

By Ryan Wood

July 22, 2006

Finally, the Kansas City Royals won one from the mighty New York Yankees - even if it was just the allegiance of a single, loyal fan.

Every home game - and "every" is no stretch - Frances Ingemann is at Kauffman Stadium, usually wearing a blue dress and a gold baseball necklace, cheering on her favorite team. The Royals grabbed her tight in the 1980s and have yet to let go.

Or was it the other way around?

"I just enjoy the game," said Ingemann, a Lawrence resident. "You never know how it's going to turn out. There's always something different happening, and I just enjoy watching it."

Ingemann, a linguistics professor at Kansas University for 40 years before retiring in 2000, grew up in the New York area rooting for - you guessed it - the Yankees, once the Royals' nemesis dating back to fierce postseason showdowns in the 1970s.

By the time that rivalry blossomed, Ingemann already was in Kansas, where a love for the Royals had not yet developed but a passion for the Yankees was fading away. Quite frankly, she was too busy spending her summers traveling to pay much attention to baseball.

FRANCES INGEMANN, PROFESSOR EMERITA IN LINGUISTICS AT KANSAS UNIVERSITY, stops in front of her house on Tennessee Street with her Royals tickets and parking pass in hand. Ingemann first purchased season tickets in 1985 and has attended nearly every Royals home game since.

But a friend took Ingemann to a Royals game in the late '70s, when the stadium had orange seats, AstroTurf, cheap beer, a different name and a better product playing inside of it.

And she liked it.

She started going to single games on her own. Then more. Then more.

Pretty soon, getting a season ticket was more logical than buying dozens of single-game ducats. So Ingemann bought a season pass for the first time in 1985. The Royals were about to win the World Series.

"People told me not to expect that every year," she said with a laugh.

Ingemann was at all four World Series games in Kansas City that year - the first two losses to the St. Louis Cardinals, the last two jubilant victories that had a city bursting with pride.

"The one thing that stands out most was that last game," Ingemann said. "Before the game even started, everyone was celebrating. They were so absolutely sure that we were going to win."

Frances Ingemann gets in her car for the drive to Kauffman Stadium in Missouri. Ingemann, a professor emerita in linguistics at Kansas University, has driven to every Royals home game for about 20 years.

The reason? Kansas City had just erased a 3-1 deficit to the Toronto Blue Jays in the American League Championship Series. History surely was going to repeat itself against the Cardinals, right?

Apparently so. In Ingemann's first year as a season-ticket holder, the Royals won their first and only World Series, also erasing a 3-1 series deficit against St. Louis.

That was 21 years ago, and the Royals certainly aren't the franchise they used to be. But Ingemann continues going anyway. She usually wears the blue dress, usually leaves at 5:45 p.m. for a 7:10 game, usually takes a friend or two along with her. If it's not too hot, she'll sit in her usual seat, six rows behind the Royals dugout in section 112. If it's too humid or threatening to rain, she'll head to the Stadium Club up the left-field line and watch in a climate-controlled atmosphere.

Twenty-one years, 81 games a year does add up to one thing - a lot of promotional giveaways. She has bobbleheads, shirts, lapel pins, magnetic schedules, hats and anything else the Royals passed out over the years. Those are the games when a friend is guaranteed to tag along with her, too.

Wood, Rylan "Royally Dedicated to the Boys in Blue" The Lawrence Journal World. 22 July 2006. 20 July 2012. < [http://www2.ljworld.com/news/2006/jul/22/royally\\_dedicated\\_boys\\_blue/](http://www2.ljworld.com/news/2006/jul/22/royally_dedicated_boys_blue/)>

She has all the stuff stored away, lots of blue piling up in her enchanting house on Tennessee Street.

"The drawers," she said, "are overflowing."

Frances Ingemann, professor emerita in linguistics at Kansas University, stops in front of her house on Tennessee Street with her Royals tickets and parking pass. Ingemann had driven to nearly every Royals home game for more than 20 years.

Ingemann keeps it all, though, because she's no casual baseball fan. She understands that one-run victories separate a good team from a bad team. She prefers brilliant defense on the infield to mashed home runs into the water fountains. And she claims she's pretty close to being able to spell "Grudzielanek" and "Mientkiewicz" without cheating and looking at the scoreboard.

Of course, such knowledge is expected of someone who has 21 straight years of season tickets for a team that hasn't sniffed the playoffs in 20 of them. And coming from Yankees fandom, a team which ALWAYS find a way to compete, her bond for the Royals has to be strong to withstand the futility.

"As I left (New York) and came out here, you tend to root for the players that you see regularly," Ingemann said. "That's why I'm interested in the Royals. I just don't see the Yankees anymore except when they come here."

She then let the Royal blue bleed out.

"Of course then," she said, "they're the enemy."