

Gill had three passions - family, baseball and education - and he blended them masterfully. He was married to **Janet** for 39 years, the same amount of time he taught English and later physical education at Christian Brothers.

The Gills raised four sons in east Sacramento: **Ed, Dan, Steve and Tom** are all now in their 30s.

Land Park was their summer playground. Janet was a fixture at hundreds of games, chewing on seeds and umpires from her lawn chair. She kept score and handed out cookies and encouragement.

Gill once said even had his sons preferred swimming, he'd be proud.

"I don't know swimming, and I wouldn't float for long," Gill cracked. "You know, I was lucky."

Lucky in that he got to coach all of his boys at CBS and in American Legion. Not that Gill didn't raise his voice to rally the restless sons as youths or teenagers.

"We used to go to Legion games as little kids, and Dad had one eye on the game and one on us," said

He then decided to get into education.

Gill was known as a baseball coach, but he led one of the most memorable basketball teams in Sac-Joaquin Section history. His 1978 CBS team that featured **Dave Heppell, Chris Winchell, Joe Mugartegui** and **Rich Hennig** beat rival Jesuit for the large-school championship.

Hennig now coaches baseball at CBS, where he carries on a legacy that also includes the late **Ron Limeberger**.

"We still play the same way Joe taught us, with focus and attention to detail, while also enjoying the game," Hennig said. "Joe taught me a slider when I played Legion ball for him, and that pitch turned my career around, allowing me to play in the Giants organization."

"He was always cracking jokes. A good man who cared about (his players) deeply. He will be missed."

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Joe Gill: Despite his immense size, he had much style and grace.

Coach truly had big impact at CBS

How smooth was **Joe Gill?**

For a man of his immense size, he didn't rampage across the diamond to confront umpires during his many years coaching baseball at Christian Brothers High School and in the Southside American Legion.

He glided. Blue windbreaker flapping, hat pulled low, Gill was a towering figure. And yet the former English major spoke softly and articulately.

"If I ran," he once told me, "I'd fall and probably get thrown out. At my size, it's better to be a little more graceful."

Gill, who died late Wednesday from heart failure at 67, had a lot of grace and style. We tried to hook up for an interview recently, but even in failing health, Gill downplayed his role as a teacher, coach and father. Those around him say he greatly underestimated his influence on others.

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Steve, who keeps his hand in baseball as an adult-league coach and the public address announcer for Sacramento City College. "We'd go into the dugout, put on catching gear, hats, batting gloves, then run over behind the bushes and play our own game."

"Then we'd hear Dad barking our names. The equipment was for his Legion players, and they were looking for it. We knew deep down, he loved it."

After graduating from Bishop Armstrong High in 1962, the precursor to CBS, Gill played baseball at USF and later was drafted by the Yankees. He played one season of minor-league ball, hitting .215 in the Class-A Florida League in 1967.