

Adoption a hit with former Tiger

BY LARRY PALADINO
STAFF WRITER

Jim Northrup hit some big home runs when he was with the Detroit Tigers a generation ago.

The Southfield businessman was a star outfielder for a decade and a hero of the 1968 World Series championship Tigers, getting the decisive triple in the final game.

Kamil Jack Northrup is just 4 years old and doesn't yet know of such things, though one day he'll watch video tape highlights of his dad's major league baseball career and feel proud.

But as he grows into adulthood, his admiration could very well center on something more

significant: his rescue from an orphan existence and possible brief lifespan.

Jim and Patty Northrup adopted Kamil from a Polish orphanage a year ago, willing to take on responsibilities for a child with a serious health problem. His esophagus wasn't connected to his intestine at birth, but although he had an operation at 4 months old, it didn't solve the problem.

"I've been around, though, and know a lot of people," Jim Northrup said last week, at his office on Southfield Road near 12 Mile, where he is a manufacturer's representative.

"I called people I knew and talked to a doctor at the University of Michigan Hospital who

pioneered an operation that would help Kamil," he said. "He said, 'We can fix it, don't worry about it.' And he did. They put in a valve to keep his food from coming back up. The only problem was there was the danger of him getting a buildup of gas that couldn't escape. But Kamil can burp now. He never gets sick. He'll eventually have the valve taken out."

Northrup has three children, now adults, from a previous marriage. He and Patty were married for more than seven years when they decided to adopt. In the United States, though, the procedures are cumbersome and the waiting periods long for those who hope to get a healthy, newborn infant, he said.

They wound up seeking out a woman from Pennsylvania who had adopted two of her own children from the same orphanage in Wroclaw, Poland. The woman, who had placed 160 orphans in new homes, helped arrange the adoption.

He said he was impressed with the care at the orphanage and that it was clean. Families there who are poor can turn their children over to orphanages for care, Northrup said, and can allow the orphanages to put them up for adoption. Any child whose parents don't visit within two years also can be put up for adoption, he said.

It is difficult, though, to get newborns for adoption.

"If you have Polish heritage it's no problem at all," he said, and there was no such heritage in his or his wife's background. But Kamil's health problem and fact he was more than 2 years old worked in the Northrups' favor and, after spending four days with Kamil in Poland, they went before a three-person panel at the orphanage and three weeks later the adoption was approved. July 6, 1995, Kamil arrived in the U.S.

"He's a wonderful little boy," Jim Northrup said. "He'll be 4 in November. He's learned the language well. He still understands Polish, but he was so young he hadn't spoken much Polish yet anyway."

Eventually Kamil will likely learn that his father played 11 years with the Tigers, 1964-74, then 21 games with Montreal and 92 with Baltimore. For his career he hit 163 home runs — including 70 in a three-year stretch (1968-70) — and had 610 runs-batted-in.

Kamil also will find out his dad led the Tigers in RBI in 1968 with 90 and in 1970 with 80; and that he owns the team record for most runs batted in a game, getting eight twice — once with two grand-slam home runs. He is among those who cleared the right field roof with a homer.

But saving Kamil from an uncertain fate, perhaps that is the most lasting accomplishment of them all.



STAFF PHOTO BY JERRY ZOLNERT

Northrup at work: Jim Northrup, a star of the Detroit Tigers' 1968 championship season, is a manufacturer's representative with an office in Southfield for the past seven years.



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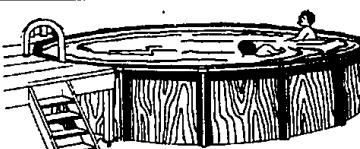
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