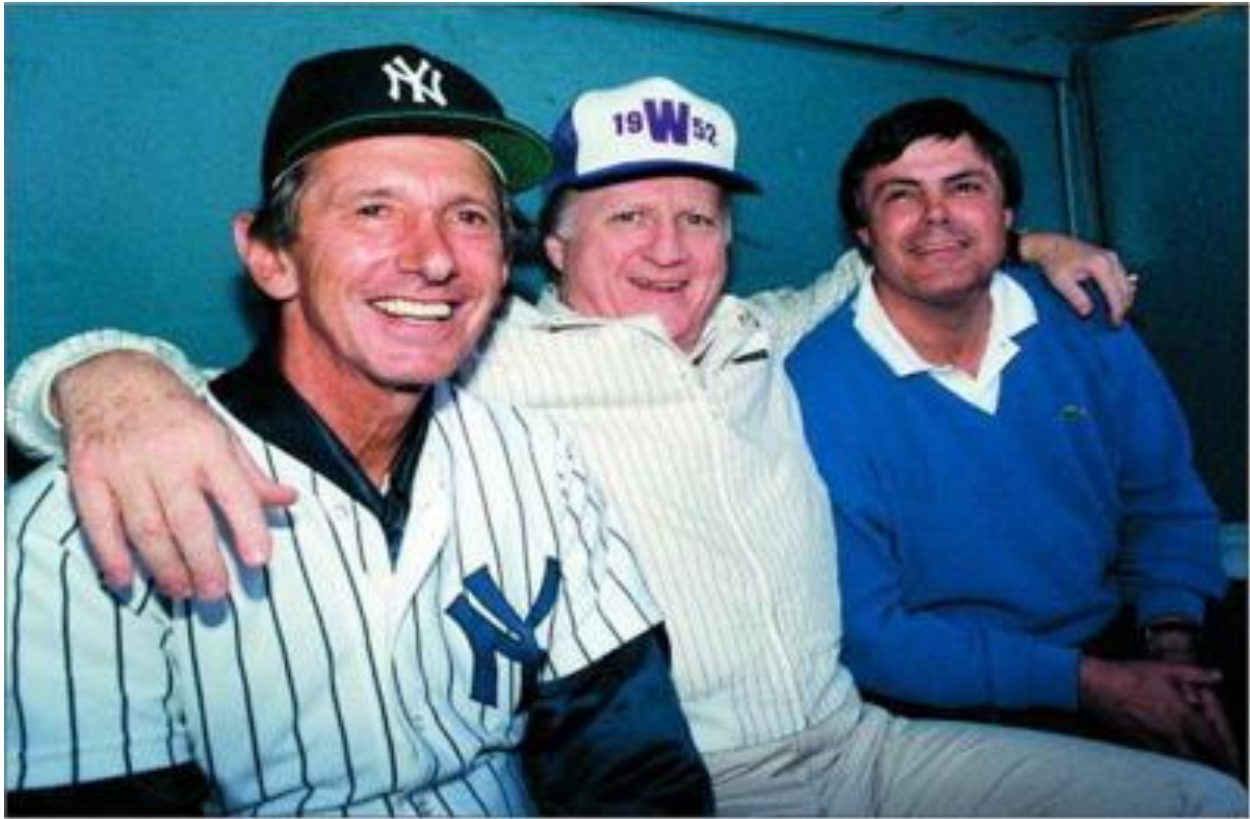


The Berkshire Eagle

Yankees' legendary owner also a Williams grad

By Tony Dobrowolski, Wednesday July 14, 2010



WILLIAMSTOWN - The success of the New York Yankees may have been George Steinbrenner's primary obsession. But one of his primary loves was Williams College, his alma mater. Steinbrenner, who died Tuesday of a heart attack at age 80, graduated from Williams with a bachelor's degree in 1952.

"He seemed like a typical Williams alumnus," college spokesman James Kolesar said Tuesday. "He was proud of his Williams connection, a frequent attender of college reunions and a donor to the college.

"People here certainly have the family in their thoughts, and that includes his son Hal," who graduated from Williams in 1991, Kolesar added. Steinbrenner's last appearance on campus was

at his 50th class reunion in 2002, Kolesar said. But the Yankees' owner made several other appearances over the years. A hurdler who captained the Williams track team and participated in the prestigious Penn Relays in 1952, Steinbrenner in 1988 spearheaded a \$900,000 alumni fundraising drive that provided the college with a new all-weather outdoor track and an upgraded baseball facility. Steinbrenner personally donated \$350,000 for the project.

"You have to understand that, prior to that, the facilities we had were awful," said Dalton native Jim Duquette, a former New York Mets and Baltimore Orioles front office executive who was a Williams baseball team captain in 1988. "Junior year, we had to play a lot of games at Mount Greylock [Regional High School] because the field they put us on had gotten flooded.

"So we were in dire need. It was long overdue," said Duquette, currently a broadcaster with Sirius/XM radio. "We were obviously thrilled to be playing on a legit field again."

Former Red Sox general manager Dan Duquette, a Dalton native who graduated from Amherst in 1980, said he and Steinbrenner actively followed the storied rivalry between the Williams and Amherst football teams.

"George and I bet \$40 on the Amherst-Williams game for years," said Dan, who is Jim's cousin. "I got tired of paying him back there for a while. That happened to coincide with all the years we [the Red Sox] came in second behind the Yankees.

"I had a lot of love and respect for George," Dan added. "He did a lot of things for writers and players and people he respected. He had a very generous heart. I learned a lot from him, and he was always terrific to our family."

Given his run-ins with the media while with the Yankees, it's ironic that Steinbrenner served as sports editor of the school newspaper, the Williams Record, during his junior and senior years.

During the fall of 1951, Steinbrenner wrote several columns for the Record, including one in which he mocked the Amherst Lord Jeffs for being ranked among the top 30 football teams in the country, ahead of Yale, Navy, and Southern Methodist.

"With all due respect to Lord Jeffrey - he looks about as much out of place as Dolly Madison at a Sunday milk punch party," Steinbrenner wrote in one early season offering.

Kolesar said Steinbrenner made amends for his acerbic sports writing in a recently published biography by New York Daily News sportswriter Bill Madden.

"He kind of took it back," Kolesar said, referring to Steinbrenner's comments in Madden's book. "Then later he said he had gone too far."

Steinbrenner tried out for Williams as a running back during his senior year, but he left the football team after its preseason scrimmage to focus on track and field.
