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## **Memorable Trip to Baltimore for Criscione and his Family**

His stay in the major leagues lasted one month in the summer of 1977. His playing time amounted to less than that: nine at-bats, three hits, one homer and one RBI.

Yet, Dunkirk native Dave Criscione will always have a place in Baltimore Oriole history of now-closed Memorial Stadium.

What made Criscione's one month with the Birds so memorable, not to mention the birth of his first of three daughters, was his one homer. It was a game-winner on July 25 in the 11th inning off Milwaukee reliever Sam Hinds.

Criscione tagged Hinds' 1-2 pitch, a fastball, over the 360- foot sign in left-center, and became an instant hero.

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LAST SUNDAY, Criscione joined 75 to 100 other former Orioles for the final game at Memorial Stadium. The team will move to a new park near the Baltimore waterfront next season.

"It was beautiful, one of the most moving experiences I ever had," Criscione said this week from his Fredonia home. "Nobody really saw the game. They came to see the closing of the ballpark."

Criscione and his family -- wife Marj and daughters Keri, Casey and Kylee -- spent the weekend visiting with former O's and their families. At a reception, the girls had a chance to meet the players they had heard about.

Brooks Robinson made an impression on Keri, 14. She and Casey, 11, listened attentively as former O's manager Earl Weaver told them how fortunate their dad was to have made it to the major leagues.

"He got called away before he finished the story," Criscione said. "But I think they (the girls) got the gist of it."

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AT THE POST-GAME CEREMONY the next day, the former Oriole took

the field for the last time. Without any public address announcement, each player took his position . Frank Robinson trotted out to right field. Boog Powell lumbered to first. Palmer, Bobby Grich, Rick Dempsey. They were all there.

Somewhere down the line of players, Criscione trotted out to home plate. A roar went up as he exited the dugout, followed by another roar when he appeared on the scoreboard television.

Peter Criscione, now living in Virginia, was in a seat behind home plate when his uncle Dave took the field.

"Criscione," exclaimed another fan in the box seats, "I remember him." The younger Criscione had to do everthing he could to keep from grabbing the other fan and explaining who he was.

"Words could not describe the feeling," said Dave. This was the last time in the stadium for everyone. I played there only two games that meant anything, yet for me it meant a lot. I can't imagine what it meant to some of the other guys."

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THERE WERE OTHER poignant moments. Dempsey led the crowd in the Wild Bill Hagy cheer, spelling Orioles with his body. He also did his Babe Ruth imitation, towels under his jersey giving him Ruthian heft.

Home plate from Memorial Stadium was removed by eight men wearing tuxedos and was driven to the new park where it was placed in the ground while the Memorial Stadium crowd watched on the giant center-field television screen.

Long-time O's radio announcer Rex Barney had the last word from a hospital room. Barney, who had collapsed on the job during a late game on Friday before, gave his signature sign-off. "Thank you," Barney said. "Thank you," the fans joined in.

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THERE WAS ANOTHER highlight to Criscione's weekend. To his surprise, he found himself mentioned in a book about the stadium.

"There's a page and a half about me," he said. "It talks about my few hits and there's a picture of the scoreboard 'Congratulations to Dave and Marj Criscione on the birth of their daughter, Keri Lee, born July 21, 1977.' It's kind of nice to be remembered as part of their history.