



SOFTBALL PLAYER PROFILE: RENE VALLIERES

-Larry Wolfe

Rene Vallieres grew up in Utica, NY, a baseball town, but left the sport at age 8 to pursue golf. His golf career peaked at age 11 when he came in second in a junior tournament. He envisioned a PGA career, but lack of talent surfaced quickly, he says. That second place was the only sports award he ever received until a couple months ago.

You'll often see Rene's wife, Gloria, at Sun Lakes softball games, cheering for both sides. They met in high school and recently celebrated their 54th anniversary. They have three creative children: a professional artist, a published author, and a university dean. They're proud of their children's careers, but mostly for producing 6 wonderful grandchildren.

Rene breaks down his work life into decades: High School English teacher; Pastor and church planter; IT manager - all in New York; and finally, Training Manager in Utah. Rene retired in 2016 and the Vallieres have been living in Sun Lakes Country Club since 2019. Rene and Gloria are active Sun Lakers, walking the lakes, making new friends, dancing at Stone & Barrel, and leading a neighborhood Bible study every Friday afternoon.

Rene says that he and Gloria's life changed dramatically when God got a hold of them and gave them a new life in Jesus Christ over 40 years ago. They had heard about Jesus growing up but had never realized that new life in Christ is a gift received and not a prize earned. What a relief! This new life led them to apply to be missionaries in Africa. They were accepted by the Maryknoll order of the Catholic church and assigned to a parish in Kisumu, Kenya. Rene laughs as he says, "Our parents were surprised we passed the psychological testing." Kenya didn't work out, but God had other plans for them. They went on to plant 3 churches in Upstate New York. After full-time ministry, Rene and Gloria went on to author two books on what the Bible has to say about sex in marriage. (Rene says that this time their kids questioned their psychological health!) Rene also wrote a book on small group ministry which he is in the process of revising. Rene and Gloria attend SLSSA President Doug Warwick's church, Calvary Ahwatukee, and Rene fills the pulpit occasionally.

Rene played little softball over the years, with only an occasional church pick-up game and a few games in a Salt Lake municipal league. He was apprehensive about getting into softball, citing lack of experience and talent but Gloria's brother, Jim Entwistle, encouraged him to try it out. Jim was right! Rene enjoyed the competition and especially the camaraderie with the players. Rene says everyone has been encouraging, helpful, and patient with his development. As it turned out, Rene hit over .600 in his first season and won Rookie-of-the-Year in the Lakes Division much to his surprise! He only had to wait 64 years to get his second sports award!