



Softball Player Profile: Neal Buckner
-by Larry Wolfe

The 1957 Pulitzer prize-winning book “Profiles in Courage,” by John F. Kennedy, included profiles of eight US Senators who exhibited courage in trying times; however, it’s not just stories about the past, but a message of hope and confidence in the future. That same outlook and philosophy defines Neal Buckner. For over six years Neal has been battling cancer. He beat prostate cancer back in 2007, but in late 2011 was diagnosed with bone cancer. Since that time he’s gone through various treatments and many ups and downs. He’s currently receiving monthly injections and “feeling great and enjoying all the blessings and pleasures of life.”

Those blessings include his wife, Kathi, children Todd and Jyl and six grandchildren. The pleasures, among others, include his ability to continue playing softball. Neal plays in our competitive league and also manages and plays on a tournament team sponsored by his real estate company. He’s a sure-handed infielder and line-drive leadoff hitter who at press time was hitting over .600. His baseball and softball prowess go back to high school where he earned All-State honors as a catcher for the Loveland (CO) Indians. Later he played in many fast-pitch and slow-pitch leagues, earning

numerous awards and championships. His ultimate honor was his induction into the Colorado ASA Fast-Pitch Hall of Fame in 2009.

Neal wasn't a one-sport star as he also excelled in football (All Conference) and wrestling (All State). Additionally, he was a standout in the classroom and was Class President and President of the Lettermen's Club at Loveland High. As a change of pace, he participated in rodeos as a bull rider and "wild cow" milker! A Council Bluffs, Iowa native, Neal and his family moved to Loveland when he was eight. After high school, Neal earned his degree in Marketing and Distribution at Colorado State College (now the University of Northern Colorado) where he was a top-flight wrestler, earning 5th place in the NJCAA in 1969.

A career in real estate followed with Neal joining his father's Buckner Realty Group. He spent over thirty years in the real estate industry in Colorado before "retiring" and relocating to Arizona in 2001. However, Neal didn't really retire since he got "antsy" after a couple months and got back into the business. Today he's still the owner and broker for Elite Real Estate Pros with fourteen agents working for him. The company is involved in residential and commercial real estate and trustee sales. Wife Kathi is also active in the business, acting as Property Manager responsible for over sixty seasonal properties.

Softball and running the business take up most of the Buckners' time, so Neal and Kathi don't have time for many other activities, but they do enjoy several trips per year back to Colorado to visit the family.

Neal's one of the "really nice guys" you're lucky to know. With a positive attitude and smile on his face, Neal is truly a profile in courage.