



SENIOR SOFTBALL PLAYER PROFILE: BILL SERDAR

By Larry Wolfe

William “Bill” Serdar is one of the pioneers of Sun Lakes Senior Softball. Bill, now a sprightly 72, retired to Sun Lakes in 1990 and began playing in the nascent senior softball league that year. Actually, the league really wasn’t a league at all back then. It was just a bunch of guys who’d get together to play pick up games and play some teams from other local areas. There weren’t enough players then to form an internal Sun Lakes league.

Today, the Sun Lakes Senior Softball Association operates a year round program that includes fall and winter leagues consisting of 5 or 6 teams, age group teams that play outside teams, a Senior Ladies’ team and an informal summer season for those diehards who’ll play in 100-plus degree weather.

Bill and several others in their 70’s continue to participate in senior league softball. Bill still has that smooth left-handed swing that is reminiscent of former outfielder “Sweet Billy” Williams of the Chicago Cubs. Maybe that’s just a coincidence, but Bill is an avid Cubs fan and has been since childhood. Maybe that’s natural since Bill hails from Gurnee, Illinois, a small town about 40 miles north of Chicago. When Bill was born, the village of Gurnee had a population of less than 600, but the population “exploded” to over 1100 by the time Bill graduated from high school. And talk about exciting growth.....according to Gurnee’s website, the highlight of 1952 was that the village put in new sidewalks on O’Plaine Road!

Bill played high school baseball and basketball and also played on what were then called “town teams.” Town teams were so-called semi-pro baseball teams made up of a town’s best players—young and old. These teams were usually sponsored by local merchants (and if you were lucky the merchant was a beer company!) and they played similar teams from nearby towns. Later Bill played some fast pitch softball, but didn’t become interested in slow pitch softball until he retired from the fire service and he and his wife, Marge, moved to Sun Lakes in 1990. But he then became hooked and is now

participating in his 18th year of Sun Lakes softball. Bill loves playing the game, but says that the best part of playing is the camaraderie among the players.

When asked who his favorite major league player was when he was growing up, Bill immediately said, "Bill Nicholson, an outfielder for the Chicago Cubs in the late '30s through the late '40s." Coincidentally, Bill "Swish" Nicholson batted left handed and threw right handed, just like Bill Serdar. Or maybe it was Bill Serdar who emulated Bill Nicholson?

Bill's favorite player today is not a major leaguer. It's his grandson, Adam Worthington, a pitcher for the University of Illinois at Chicago. Bill got the opportunity to see Adam in action last spring when his team played in a tournament at HoHoKam Park in Mesa. HoHoKam Park is, of course, the spring training home of....who else?.....the Chicago Cubs. Bill says that seeing his grandson play was his biggest sports-related thrill; but he also remembers being a member of the very first Sun Lakes traveling team to make it to a national tournament. The 1996 "Over 60" team won the right to go to the tournament in Alabama by winning a qualifying tournament in Yuma. They didn't win it all, but it was a big thrill to be playing against the "Big Boys of Senior Softball."

In Bill's younger days his favorite position was shortstop; today he likes to play first base best, but can and does play nearly all positions, based upon the needs of the team. Bill is just one of the nearly 100 participants in Sun Lakes softball, but he is one that enjoys the game for what it is supposed to be: a game.