



**Karen Kenyon, Star Shortstop
Circa 1955**



Coach Kenyon Today

**MS. SUN LAKES SOFTBALL: KAREN KENYON
-by Larry Wolfe**

One article can't do justice to the career accomplishments of Karen Kenyon, but here are the highest of the highlights:

- She's one of only five coaches inducted into the Women's Sports Foundation Hall of Fame;**
- She's a member of the Illinois Coaches Hall of Fame (Softball);**
- She was named National Coach of the Year in Fencing;**
- She earned Illinois and Midwest Secondary Physical Education Teacher of the Year awards;**
- She's a member of Who's Who Among American Teachers; and,**
- She was awarded a 40-year Meritorious Service Award by the American Red Cross.**

A native of Douglas, Arizona, Karen has pretty much "done it all" in women's sports and in the field of education. She was a star shortstop for the Copper Plumbing team in Douglas (this was prior to there being girls' teams in high school), then continued playing at Arizona State

University, which she attended on an academic scholarship. After graduating from ASU, she was an instructor and fencing and tennis coach at MacMurray (IL) College. She returned to ASU and earned her M.A. in Education before going to Illinois State University as an instructor, girls fencing coach and girls' tennis and softball coach.

Later she spent five years as a PE teacher and archery and fencing coach at Maine South High in Park Ridge, Illinois before beginning a twenty-five year career at Maine West High where she was the PE Chair, Girls Sports Coordinator and fencing and softball coach. During that time she achieved the accolades and awards noted above plus many, many others. However, when asked what she considered her proudest accomplishments, she said it was the large number of her students that were awarded college athletic scholarships and the fact that one of her boys' fencing students went on to compete in the 1986 Olympics.

An early proponent of Title IX (which basically prohibits sex discrimination in any education program or activity receiving federal funds), she is justifiably proud of her role in helping give young women an opportunity to excel in sports and develop habits of personal discipline that allowed them to achieve their goals in other areas of their lives. "The awards were great," said Karen, "but as a teacher and a coach, it's the success of my students that makes me most proud."

Karen retired in 1994, but was a part-time instructor in First Aid and CPR at Triton (IL) Junior College before moving back to Arizona in 1997.

She soon began playing softball in Sun Lakes, before becoming the coach of the Swingers ladies team in the Valley of the Sun League. She's now in her tenth year as coach and says the 2009 team that went 20-4 is a highlight. She also golfs in the Ironwood 18ers and Oakwood 9ers Leagues.

If that's not enough, she's now in her 43rd year as a Red Cross volunteer in the Disaster Unit where she's recently helped with the Katrina and Arizona floods disasters. Additionally, she has taught first aid and CPR for the Red Cross. In her "spare time" (what spare time!?) she serves on the Villas Association Board. Throw in her memberships in the Arizona

Chapter of NOW and the American Association of University Women and she has no problems keeping busy. She's also the mother of a daughter who has two grandkids back in Illinois.

And these are just the highlights of what has been the remarkable career of Karen Kenyon: athlete, coach, educator and equal opportunity advocate.