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SOFTBALL PLAYER PROFILE: RALPH VASQUEZ

By Larry Wolfe

With his varied careers and interests, Ralph Vasquez would seem to qualify as Sun Lakes Softball's modern Renaissance Man. From a medic and optometrist's assistant in the Army Reserves to an entrepreneurial restaurateur and owner of his own State Farm Insurance Agency, Ralph has had diverse experiences. Add his interest in and ownership of classic cars and his "vacation homes" in Prescott, San Diego Bay and Rocky Point, Mexico and you get the picture. And that doesn't include his greatest passions: his family, softball and baseball!

An Arizona native, Ralph graduated from South Mountain High in Phoenix where he was a running back on the Jaguars football team and a shortstop and three-year letterman in baseball. He earned an athletic scholarship to Mesa Community College and later played baseball for the ASU Sun Devils. Due to injury he missed his junior year when the Devils won the College World Series, but played on the 1968 squad as a senior. That team featured several future major leaguers including pitchers Larry Gura and Lerrin LaGrow and infielder Lenny Randle.

After graduating from ASU with a degree in Business Administration Ralph enlisted in the Army Reserve Corps and also began his career in the insurance industry as an underwriter for Aetna. A few years later he

became a State Farm agent and later opened his own agency. He's now in his 41st year with State Farm.

Along with his mother and father, Ralph was a founder of Poncho's Mexican Food & Cantina. His brother, George, who played pro ball in the Houston and Milwaukee organizations, later joined them and is now the primary operator of that successful establishment.

Baseball and softball have been in Ralph's blood since his days as a Little Leaguer who played in the 1958 AZ Championship Game. After his college days he played semi-pro baseball and then fast pitch softball. After a twenty-some year hiatus due to work requirements, Ralph joined our league in 2007. As a power-hitting third sacker, Ralph is one of our top league players and has been a member of several of our World Championship Tournament squads, including the 2008 team that won multiple championships. His State Farm agency sponsors a league team and Poncho's is the current sponsor of our 65+ tournament team. Besides playing ball, Ralph is an avid fan; he's been a D-backs season ticket holder since day one and follows the Padres when in San Diego. He's also attended five different World Series.

Then there's Ralph, the classic car enthusiast. He currently owns a 1921 T-Bucket Hot Rod, a 1967 "427" Corvette, the classic 1957 Chevy Bel-Air (we all wanted one of those!) and the 2007 Z-06 Corvette.

Besides frequent getaways to their three "other homes," Ralph and his lovely wife, Rebecca, recently enjoyed visits to Rome, Paris and Normandy.

Ralph isn't just involved in lots of things; he enjoys them all...and that's what makes him a true Renaissance Man!

**PHOTO CAPTION
Ralph Vasquez and his 1921 T-bucket hot rod**