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SOFTBALL PLAYER PROFILE: BILLY KEE
-Larry Wolfe

Billy Kee is a native of Paris...that would be Paris, Arkansas, not Paris, France. Billy's father and two older brothers went from sharecrop farming in Arkansas to custom farm work in Casa Grande in September 1956; three months later Billy, his mother and the rest of the family joined them. The family moved west on a slow milk wagon train that stopped at Tucson (plus everywhere in between) even though their ticket said "Casa Grande." They took a bus the rest of the way. Stepping off the bus into two feet of water, they had arrived just in time for the Great Flood of 1956/57.

Things did get better after that. Billy worked his way through high school as a dishwasher and fry cook at the local one and only truck stop.

(At the time, Casa Grande's population was about 4,000 versus 50,000 plus today.) Billy did have time to play baseball for the Casa Grande Union High Cougars.

After graduating he spent six years in the Army National Guard in an Artillery Unit. He participated in the infamous Joint Exercise Desert Strike in the Mohave Desert, the largest Army/Air Force maneuvers since WWII.

Billy worked at a chemical company in Stanfield, a farm equipment services company and at Feeder's Grain Company in Casa Grande before joining Arizona Public Service Company (APS) at age 29. Little did he know at the time that APS would be his employer for the next thirty years. He worked in their power plants, in substation construction and in their natural gas division (back when APS was both a gas and electric company) before spending his last ten years as Senior Underground Facilities Locator.

Billy's been involved in softball "forever!" He was the manager of the Casa Grande Rounders, a travel team that played in tournaments throughout Arizona and the southwest for over thirty years. He credits his wife Beverly for keeping that team organized. He also helped run the city leagues in Casa Grande and helped the city build its softball fields. He was introduced to Sun Lakes Softball several years ago by Dick Schroeder, one of our former long time members. Billy's been one of our top players ever since, finishing among our top ten hitters several times and still hitting the long ball today. He also continues to play for various senior softball tournament teams in the area, including the 70s Ponchos.

Besides softball, Billy enjoys all kinds of outdoor activities including camping, fishing, hunting and biking. As a youth, you could add trapping to that list. Since his retirement from APS in 2002, he's worked the summer months managing 150 plus campsites at Hawley Lake for the White Mountain Apache Tribe.

In their blended family, Billy and Beverly, his wife of over thirty-four years, have nine children, "twenty some" grandkids and "several" great grandchildren. "It's hard to keep track," he says with a grin!