



SENIOR SOFTBALL PLAYER PROFILE: KEN BRENDEN
By Larry Wolfe

“If it’s fun, then it’s not work.” That’s one of Ken Brenden’s philosophies of life.

Ken is one of ten siblings who was raised on a dairy farm near Eau Claire, Wisconsin. He graduated from Elk Mound High where he was a star left fielder for the Mounders. He’s still remembered for the time during his senior year when, while chasing a fly ball, he ran into the goal post and knocked it down. (Yes, the baseball field doubled as a football field!) This was also the first time that Ken’s future wife, Shirley, saw him play ball! Pretty impressive.... (I guess it didn’t deter the romance though, because Ken and Shirley will celebrate their 40th anniversary this fall.)

After high school Ken was hired as an assembly line worker by the Chrysler Corporation at their Belvidere, Illinois Assembly Plant. It would be the beginning of a thirty-year career with the company. Through Chrysler’s tuition reimbursement program, Ken was able to

obtain a degree in Business and Accounting from nearby Rockford College. He then moved into white collar and management positions focusing on employee benefits, health care and pensions. Based upon his long tenure with the company, Ken was able to retire before his 48th birthday.

He and Shirley moved to Sun Lakes that same year. Besides the Arizona weather, the main draw was our senior softball field and program. Ken had a lifelong interest in baseball and softball, playing on and managing many city league teams in Illinois. He recalls many players quitting in their 30's because they were getting too old! Never in Sun Lakes! He does, however, recall trying to impress the Sun Lakes players on his first day at the field and ending up with a pulled calf muscle that sidelined him for six months!

Ken didn't completely retire in Sun Lakes. He worked for awhile as a Hiring Director for Wal-Mart and later was employed by St. Joe's Hospital. He then became a Certified Financial Planner through a University of Phoenix program. That led him to form the fee-based Brenden Financial Planning Services Company in 2004. He keeps busy conducting financial planning seminars for companies such as Transamerica as well as a large number of individual clients.

Long-distance running is another passion; he's run in numerous 10K races, half-marathons and a couple marathons. His biggest sports thrill was completing a full 26-mile marathon in 3:40. That's faster than lots of Sun Lakers drive! He enjoys skiing, too, and ranks that sport second only to softball. He likes to ski in the mountains of Colorado and Utah. Besides all of that, Ken coordinates our Saturday softball program and has umpired on the high school level and in the Chandler City League. Plus, he's the manager of our 55+ Tournament Team.

If that sounds like a lot of work, it's not to Ken, because he thoroughly enjoys it all. And like he says, "If it's fun, it's not work!"