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SOFTBALL PLAYER PROFILE: ERNIE FLORES

-Larry Wolfe

A Minnesota native, Ernie Flores grew up in St. Paul where he was a member of the basketball, football and track teams for the Humboldt Indians (now the politically correct Humboldt Hawks). In fact, he was a member of that school's last city championship football squad.

After high school, Ernie went to a St. Paul Technical College and became a certified pipe fitter. This would lead to a 42-year career in the pipe fitting trade. He initially worked for a few companies in the St. Paul area for six plus years before being hired by the University of Minnesota where he would enjoy a 36-year career. He was involved in new construction jobs, maintenance programs and parts-making for the University.

Ernie met his wife-to-be, Sherri, while they were in high school. They've now been married over forty years and have four children, daughters Sarah, Celena and Jessica and son, Brandon. There are now twelve grandkids and one great grandson. Sarah lives in nearby Tucson, while the other two girls are back in St. Paul; Brandon lives in Wisconsin.

Surprisingly, baseball and softball weren't really Ernie's "thing" as a young man, because he's now one of the top players in our Lakes Division. In the recently completed Fall Session, he finished second in the league in batting with a .744 mark and was in the top ten in singles, doubles, triples and slugging percentage. Maybe softball is his "thing" now!

Although Ernie did play some softball in his twenties and thirties, he was more into coaching Pop Warner football and youth basketball teams. He's also had a long-time interest in fishing and hunting. He's done a lot of fishing for walleye and hunting deer back in Minnesota. This past December, his number was drawn for an elk tag and he went hunting with fellow softball player, Jerry Smith, on Jerry's property in Williams, east of Flagstaff. He says it was the shortest hunt of his life, as an elk was spotted within minutes of their arrival at the hunting location. The elk was bagged with a shot from 80 to 100 yards and that was it! Hunt over!

As is true for a lot of Sun Lakers, Ernie has recently got into playing pickleball, too. Additionally, he and Sherri enjoy hiking and travel. Pre-COVID, they did a lot of getaways to Mexico, primarily Puerto Vallarta and Cancun, and hope to be able to do that again soon. They also enjoy family time, including watching the grandkids participate in sports and other activities.

Sherri and Ernie became snowbird residents of Sun Lakes about four years ago after Ernie retired; however, they still spend the months of May through October at a cabin they own on beautiful Lake Osakis, Minnesota, which is noted for its healthy stock of walleye, panfish and bass. That allows them to enjoy the "good life" twice over, both in Sun Lakes and in Minnesota!