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**SOFTBALL PLAYER PROFILE: RICK OIEN
-Larry Wolfe**

Rick Oien grew up in the small town of Grenora in northwest North Dakota, just thirty miles from the Canadian border. Grenora was named after the Great Northern Railway due to its position at the end of a branch line of that railway. Rick's last name is pronounced Oy-en and is of Norwegian origin and was the occupational name for a shepherd. He says it's as common as Smith or Jones is in the US!

After graduating from Grenora High in 1971, Rick enlisted in the Navy for a four-year tour in order to “see the world.” He was headquartered at Davis Field, Rhode Island, then Oxnard, California, but also did three five-month stints in Antarctica where he managed vehicle warehouses and provided other logistical support for the National Service Foundation’s appropriately-named Operation Deep Freeze. He saw the world, at least part of it! Mission accomplished.

After completing his service time, he settled in Casper, Wyoming, where, after attending college for a year, he married and began working as a carrier for the Post Office. He left the postal service after three years because his job interfered with his ability to play softball on weekends! After spending a couple years in the light equipment parts business, he decided to return to the Post Office. Rick spent the following twenty-five years there until his “first” retirement in 2008. He was soon lured out of retirement #1 to work for WHAM, LLC, an oil and gas services company. Rick was a gas and oil measurement technician with that company until retirement #2 in 2016.

Rick and Linda Hadler, his life partner of over thirteen years, have a blended family of seven adult children. The “kids” are spread out, so that gives them lots of places to visit.

Softball has been a big part of Rick’s life since he began playing fast-pitch in the Navy. That’s when he says he became “addicted” to the sport. Later he played fast-pitch for nearly twenty years in Casper before taking a twenty-year hiatus from the sport. The Casper team was one of the best in the region and even won a state title. Rick was player/manager for the last five years he played. He joined our league in 2017 and thoroughly enjoys both league play and playing on our traveling tournament teams. He says, “Anytime you can find 100+ guys who love the same thing you do, you’re living the dream!”

Golfing was also in Rick’s plans when he retired to Arizona, but softball has taken over, so there’s little time for golf. He’s also a big time “sports nut,” and a long time die-hard fan of the Minnesota Vikings and Twins. He remembers as a youngster listening to nearly every Twins game on an AM radio with his Grandpa.

When asked what one thing he’d change if he could have a “do over,” he said, “I never would have quit playing softball for that twenty-year period!”