



SENIOR SOFTBALL PLAYER PROFILE: MIKE KRAKOWIAK

By Larry Wolfe

Born in Jersey City, Mike Krakowiak grew up in Florham Park, New Jersey and graduated from Hanover Park Regional High School where he starred as a basketball player for the Hornets.

As a young man, Mike relocated to Phoenix and found his first real job with U-Haul. He then decided to become a carpenter, but after a few months sheeting roofs during our warmish summer days, he decided to look for an indoor job! He took courses in engineering and drafting at Mesa Community College and soon was hired by Nelson Engineering, a manufacturer of high precision sheet metal products for aerospace and commercial applications. Mike spent 12 years with that company and met and married his charming wife, Patti, during that timeframe.

After Mike's stint with Nelson Engineering, he was recruited by SRP, where he had a long and productive twenty-six-year career in engineering and drafting, including computer-aided design and drafting (CAD systems) in the latter years. Mike and Patti lived in both the Prescott and Phoenix areas during this time. They relocated to Sun Lakes eight years ago and Mike retired in 2004. (Of course, Patti didn't get to retire, since she's still in charge of maintaining Mike and the household!)

Mike was introduced to Sun Lakes Senior Softball by former player Don Belousek. Since Mike had never played organized softball before, he began playing in the Monday informal league; however, he soon graduated to the "big time" Tuesday-Thursday league. Over the past four seasons, Mike's

skills have improved dramatically and he is now one of the league's solid players, usually patrolling the outfield and catching nearly everything hit his way. He says he really enjoys the camaraderie of the players and the opportunity to get to know many new people.

Being a "Joisey Boy," Mike was naturally a New York baseball fan growing up, where he made many trips to old Yankee Stadium and the Polo Grounds. He also had a high school buddy, Archie Moore, who played briefly for the Yankees in 1964-1965. In addition, Mike fondly remembers playing stick ball in the streets, where the "equipment" consisted of those spongy pink rubber balls, a broomstick and a great imagination!

Today Mike enjoys bowling (where he recently began participating in the Sun Lakes Wednesday League), dabbling with his guitar and collecting Lionel Trains, a hobby he began in high school.

When asked about his best life memory, Mike immediately said it was meeting Patti. They met at a Bible study class, which he says, "Sure beats meeting someone in a bar!" Evidently that's true, because Mike and Patti have been happily married for over thirty-two years and have three great kids and five grandchildren. They're happy and thankful that the entire extended family resides in Arizona, which allows for many family get-togethers and the opportunity to watch their grandkids grow up. And that is sure to provide a lot of new happy life memories....