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SOFTBALL PLAYER PROFILE: LARRY KAUFMANN

By Larry Wolfe

A five-tool baseball or softball player is that rare individual who possesses the ability to hit for a high average, hit with power (think long homeruns) and run, throw and field at the highest levels of proficiency. In baseball history, think Mickey Mantle and Willie Mays. In Sun Lakes softball, think Larry Kaufmann.

A native of Waukegan, Illinois, Larry played basketball and ran cross country for the WHS Bulldogs, but it was on the diamond that he really excelled. He was an All-Chicago Area shortstop who displayed those five tools at an early age. He was later named the shortstop on the All-25 Year Team when his long time coach retired from WHS.

At the University of Illinois he majored in PE and Spanish and played baseball for the Fighting Illini. As a third generation Illini grad Larry entered the business world as an adjuster for Nationwide Insurance.

Why would a PE/Spanish major become an insurance adjuster? Because they offered him a company car (a 1970 Ford Galaxy!), \$400 more than anyone else and Wilson Sporting Goods wouldn't hire him.

As a "still living with the parents" kid, Larry was an original "failure to launch" project. After three years at Nationwide, he did finally "launch" and became a drifter with his dog, Burly Grimes. They stayed with friends everywhere along the west coast before finally landing in Phoenix. In November of '73 he saw guys playing softball in the winter. That's when he decided Arizona was for him!

Larry worked for CSE Insurance in Phoenix for fourteen years as an adjuster and then regional manager before forming his own independent adjusting services company. After nineteen years he sold that business and retired at age 59.

He had his best "break" in 1979 when he literally broke his back. It was at the hospital that he met and fell in love with a "breathtakingly beautiful Asian nurse" named Felicia. Why she rejected the twenty-one doctors who were chasing her and married Larry is a mystery to him to this day! Larry and Felicia have two "perfect daughters" who are married and live in Del Mar and Venice Beach, California.

Besides softball, Larry's adventures have included canoeing (he and his best buds from the 7th grade have traveled to Quetico Park in Canada for that), static-line jumping from airplanes and roadrunning (everything from 5K's to marathons). On the lighter side, Larry and Felicia consider themselves amateur movie critics and also golf together. Felicia is still a full-time nurse at Banner Desert, so that somewhat limits their travels; however, they still visit the daughters in California alot. (Why not? Free resorts!)

Besides showcasing his five tools and leading the league in hitting last year with a record .838 average, Larry managed the Desert Cove squad to season and tournament championships. You might think a five-tool guy might have a real ego, but with Larry it's just the opposite. He actually has a sixth tool: all-around nice guy!