



Softball Player Profile: Al Grefsheim
-by Larry Wolfe

Well, the south side of Chicago was the baddest part of town,
And if you went down there, you just better beware....of a cop they called
Big Al.

Now Al was more than trouble; you see he stood 'bout six foot four.
All the downtown ladies called him handsome, but the bad guys called him
“Sir.” (With apologies to Jim Croce and Bad, Bad Leroy Brown!)

“Big Al” Grefsheim spent over twenty-three years with the Chicago Police
Department, the last nineteen as a detective specializing in homicides and
aggravated battery crimes on the city’s south side. He estimates that he
handled nearly 600 homicide scenes and cleared nearly 90% of those cases.

He loved the many challenges of that job and hated to retire; however, sunny Arizona called and in 1989 he and his family moved west.

Although Al was born in Albert Lea, Minnesota, the son of Norwegian immigrants, his family relocated to Chi-town when he was five. He graduated from Chicago Vocational High School where he played baseball and basketball for the Cavaliers. Then one cold wintry day he saw a billboard advertising the Marines' base in sunny San Diego....and the rest is history. Al spent three years in the Marines serving in all three divisions, including assignments at Camp Pendleton, Okinawa and Camp Lejeune. He also spent six months on a ship patrolling the Mediterranean Sea.

After his discharge, Al worked for Republic Steel for five years before deciding that there must be something better than a life in the mills. That's when he was accepted into the Chicago Police Academy and began his career as a policeman and detective. He spent four years "on the beat" before being promoted to detective and beginning to work at his true calling.

Softball is a second calling and has been a big part of Al's life since he played "Chicago-style" in many Tavern Leagues using the infamous 16-inch ball. He began playing senior softball here in Sun Lakes in 1989, back when there was only one team that played other area teams. He's played on numerous travel and tournament teams throughout Arizona and has been on so many championship squads that he has rings for every finger and some toes. Today he's still one of our top power hitters and is usually among our top five or ten for batting average as well. Wife Judy also loves sports and plays on our ladies team. They're both D-backs fans and enjoy traveling to other cities to watch major league baseball games.

Al has a son in Chicago, a daughter in Boston and his youngest daughter here in Arizona where she's in the Cronkite School of Journalism at ASU and an intern with Fox News.

When you first meet Al, he may come across as that gruff Chicago cop from the mean side of town; but in reality he's just a big "gentle giant!" But....if you're a bad guy, you better still call him "Sir!"