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SOFTBALL PLAYER PROFILE: DENE EKHOLM

-Larry Wolfe

When you first meet Dene Ekholm, your first impression is that of a quiet, unassuming man and maybe a bit mysterious. You'd never guess what type of life he's led! Born in a small suburb of Houston (Goose Creek!), Dene and twin brother Gene moved often due to their father's job as Purchasing Agent for refinery and chemical plant projects. They lived in Texas, California, New Mexico, Kansas, Nebraska, Sarnia (Canada), Delaware and Florida. But that was just the beginning for Dene.

Upon graduating from Ft. Lauderdale High where he was All-County and All-Conference shortstop, Dene earned a full baseball scholarship at Upsala College (N.J.) At Upsala Dene was Student Council President, led the Middle Atlantic Conference in hitting, and graduated Magna Cum Laude in physics. He was awarded a graduate scholarship to Johns Hopkins University but soon realized a "career in a white lab suit" wasn't for him. He went to work for Bell Labs as a recruiter hiring scientists.

Dene had an offer from the San Francisco Giants organization but Uncle Sam intervened with a draft notice. Dene signed up for Signal Corp Officers Candidate School and upon graduation was sent to Jump School. He spent one year as an Airborne Platoon Leader in Strike Command where he participated in a NATO airborne exercise in Turkey before being sent to Vietnam during the peak years of the war (1967-68). He served as a Signal Company Commander there.

After his discharge, Dene joined Esso Research (now Exxon) in New Jersey as a recruiter and earned an MBA in Management at night school. He was transferred to Houston as a Compensation Analyst and began his international odyssey in Sydney as Compensation Director for Esso Australia. Next stop was Singapore as head of the HR Department for Esso Singapore and then on to London as HR Director-Exploration and Production for Esso Europe.

When Esso closed their London office, Dene joined Warner-Lambert as Director- International Compensation and rose through the ranks to Group VP-HR for Latin America, Asia, Australia, the Middle East, and Africa. After eight years with Warner-Lambert he was head-hunted as Corporate VP-HR for the MAF Group in Dubai, UAE.

Dene returned to the states in 1996 to teach MBA courses at Farleigh Dickinson University in N.J. for three years, and then went back to Dubai as a professor at the American University. His international odyssey finally ended in 2002 when he retired to Arizona.

Throughout Dene's career, whether in the States or overseas, baseball was present, and it still is, as Dene plays in a 65+ baseball league in Pennsylvania in the summer. His prowess on the diamond continues today as he is one of the top hitters and all-around players in the Sun Lakes Senior Softball League.

Dene and Peggy spend the summer months at her country home in Pennsylvania and enjoy competing in couples golf. They also enjoy time with family. Peggy has a son in the Navy and Dene has three kids and five grandkids in the Northeast.

But even with these normal activities one still wonders, “Who is this International Man of Mystery.”