



December 2016

**SOFTBALL PLAYER PROFILE: GENE GRANQUIST**  
**-Larry Wolfe**

**If there ever was someone who met the definition of a “softball enthusiast,” it’s Gene Granquist. Who else umpires over 500 games per year and plays another 60+ in our senior league? Gene currently umpires slow pitch games in Casa Grande, Chandler and Maricopa city leagues and also umps fast pitch games in Chandler and Northeast Nebraska. When not playing, he also umpires our Sun Lakes league games.**

**As a Nebraska farm boy, Gene didn’t play organized sports in high school. He was too busy helping with chores on the farm; but he’s made up for it since. The family farm was in Wayne County, Nebraska, near Sioux City. Gene was drafted shortly after graduating from Wayne High. After completing basic training in Ft. Lewis, Washington, he had assignments in Ft. Dix, NJ; Ft. Bliss, Texas; Ft. Benning, Georgia; and Pensacola, Florida before spending his final year of service in Korea.**

**After his discharge, Gene returned to Nebraska, living with his wife Sarah (who he married while in the service) in South Sioux City. He worked for several years at IBP, Inc., a meat processing company in**

**nearby Dakota City, before deciding to take the Civil Service Exam for a position with the US Postal Service. That led to a 34-year career with the USPS in Norfolk, southwest of Sioux City. Gene worked as a Postal Clerk and served as AFL-CIO Union President for nine years. He took an “early retirement buy-out” four years ago and headed for Arizona shortly thereafter.**

**Sarah and Gene have a son and daughter and five grandchildren. They return to their Nebraska “dream home” on the 18<sup>th</sup> tee in a golf course community for the five summer months. Gene acted as General Contractor and did his own insulating and painting and worked as the mason tender for the bricklayer. He remembers it taking over 25,000 bricks to complete the job. “I have a lot of blood, sweat and tears in that place,” he says.**

**When he has time, Gene enjoys following the financial markets and playing billiards, but now back to softball: Gene played and coached in industrial and church leagues in Nebraska, winning three state titles in the process. Additionally, he coached his daughters’ fast pitch travel team for five years, traveling thousands of miles to various tournaments. In the mid-80s, he began his umpiring avocation, primarily umpiring in fast pitch leagues. He continued playing slow pitch until the age of 60, then hung up his spikes for a few years before joining our league in 2014. He won our “Rookie-of-the-Year” Award and has been one of our league’s top hitters and pitchers ever since.**

**Since Gene lives on a golf course in Nebraska, you’d assume he’s a golfer, too, and you’d be right. Despite not taking up golf until he was in his 50s, he’s now a four handicap on his home course. He doesn’t play much golf here. Why? It might mess up his softball swing!**