



SOFTBALL PLAYER PROFILE: KEN PONZIO
-by Larry Wolfe

Goombah: Say that word at the Field of Dreams and most everyone will know you're referring to Ken Ponzio. Goombah is a word used by Italian-American men to refer to a close trusted friend...that pretty much describes Ken. And that's how Ken views his fellow players...his goombahs.

A Denver native, Ken graduated from North High, where he excelled on the Vikings' baseball team and did "some wrestling." (North High was established in 1872. Ken wasn't a student then, but did graduate some eighty-six years later!)

After graduation Ken worked at a Safeway Distribution Center for 18 years, ultimately becoming a business agent for the Teamsters. While there, he was involved in contract negotiations and handled member grievances. Later, he was recruited by UPS and moved to the other side of the negotiating table as manager of labor relations and training at their Denver-area Distribution Center.

Ken spent several years as a Line Supervisor at the Purolator Trucking Company in Chicago before moving on to Detroit to become Operations

Manager for the Allied Delivery Company. After over 25 years in trucking and distribution, he decided it was time for a change...

And quite a change it was....he changed companies, climates and lifestyles by accepting a position as District Manager at Ferrell Gas, a propane gas company with district headquarters in Thermal, CA. And there would soon be another major change, for it was there that he met his wife-to-be, Jaana (pronounce Yanna). Jaana is a story unto herself. A native of Finland who speaks three languages and reads seven, she is currently a flight attendant for USAirways. In fact, it was Jaana's job with the old America West that led the Ponzios to Arizona. Prior to retiring, Ken commuted back to his job in Thermal for five years while Jaana was flying out of Phoenix...talk about frequent fliers and drivers!

Ken is now enjoying his life of retirement. Besides being able to travel as a part of Jaana's employment perks (they've been able to visit her family in Sweden several times), they also enjoy their vacation home in Rocky Point, right on the beach. He also enjoys going to art shows with Jaana, who is an accomplished artist. Landscaping is another of his activities; in fact, he's even installed three koi fish ponds in their backyard.

That's all in addition to his passion for softball. Ken has been a softball player his entire adult life, starting with many years of fast pitch where he was a catcher and team manager of a tournament team back in Colorado. Today he's a strong-armed infielder with a "pretty good stick" in our Sun Lakes League.

It was previously noted that Ken has lots of goombahs. One is rather unusual...it's his macaw, Pancho. You may see them riding down the road on Ken's bike with Pancho on his shoulder. If you do see them, stop them for a chat and I'm sure you'll become a goombah, too!