

## CAMARADERIE

In the Fall of 2007, I found myself at the Colombia Presbyterian Hospital, cardiology unit, prepared to have an aortic valve replacement. This is an advanced medical procedure that involves the removal of the affected valve and replaced after more than 200 stitches with a healthy pig's valve. It should last a minimum of ten years. When I awoke from surgery, it was a good feeling to know I had survived this evasive operation.

My valve replacement delayed a total hip replacement for one year. In 2008, a ball and socket prosthetic implant was completed at Morristown Memorial Hospital. I found myself walking with minimal pain for the first time in 10 years. How wonderful was that? You cannot imagine, my friends. Both operations for a man of my age were indeed difficult. I'm now 74 years old and feeling quite well considering what I've been through. I write this because I marvel at today's medical technology. A few decades back, I'm not sure what my outcome may have been.

During the 2010 softball season, I was able to manage four teams and act as a league commissioner for our 60s softball league. I can honestly say that I felt quite healthy considering two major bodily replacements.

I also reflected on the years prior. There were times

when I had ill feelings about certain conflicts on the ball field. I tended to take things personally and emotionally. It was sometimes destructive.

Today, I can tell you all how fortunate I feel surviving major surgery and that the world, including softball, has new meaning for me. I find myself to be calmer and less conflicted. I enjoy every moment that I share with fellow ball players. I tend to seek simple solutions when a disputed call is made. I can now relate well to the word, "camaraderie."

My ultimate goal now is to simply enjoy this wonderful game. For those who may be anticipating knee or hip replacement. For those who may require heart surgery or any related circulatory problem. Those who have need of back surgery, rotator cuff surgery or whatever ails them physically... trust me when I say we live in a world today that can correct most physical conditions.

We are blessed and the future will hold many more "miracles" that will allow one to continue athletically.

I say, never seek to give up a sport or activities you've enjoyed for many years. There are solutions and we should seek the best ones available to us.

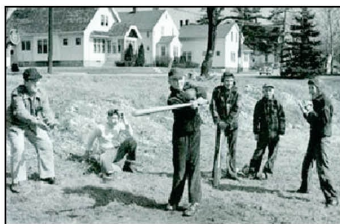
By **Sal Di Benedetto**

### Notable Quotables

*"A man once told me to walk with the Lord. I'd rather walk with the bases loaded." -Ken Singleton*

## SATURDAY MORNING FALL INVITATIONAL GAMES

*In the year 2010, we celebrated our Fall Invitational Softball VII*



Many can still remember the good old days childhood, a time when anyone could play baseball as long as you had a bat, glove and baseball.



*Where's the baked beans and sauerkraut?*

Immediately, we had 32 men that wanted to play softball in the Fall. It became known as the "Fall Invitational Softball League" consisting of two teams. Rosters were made up in advance to achieve parity. All games were two hours long beginning at 10:00 a.m. Saturday morning and ending at noon time. Innings didn't count.

Winning didn't count much either. It was just "no stress" softball. No longer kids, we now preferred to have our after-game parties. Of course, delivered pizzas were the preference of many. But, when funds grew low.... we would have our "Hot Dawg" day wherein over 25 men could be happily fed for less than \$50.

The season would end just prior to Thanksgiving. We played in rain, morning snowfall, bitter cold days.... hey, we were kids, again.



*Look closely and see the ball delivered to the plate.*

I remember my one and only bat. It broke at the handle and Dad drove in two nails to keep it together. My mitt was the size of a conventional paper plate where all 5 fingers would barely fit inside.

We would use the same baseball, day after day. I always thought that you bought baseballs that had black tape wrapped around it. Find an empty lot, grab 4 cardboard squares for bases and the game would begin.

After the game, all of us would gather up our pennies and go to the local store and buy sweet candy "colored paper dots." Must have been hundreds on one sheet of paper. Do you remember them? If we had a nickel, then we'd treat ourselves to a root beer float.

In the year 2004, I seemed to recall those wonderful old days. The idea of playing softball in the Fall months when all leagues were over, came to mind. Why not relive our youth?



*....say, "Cheese"*

There is nothing more beautiful than seeing autumn leaves. The field we play at is surrounded by trees. Formerly green leaves turn to brilliant shades of yellow, orange and red. A panorama of color that even the greatest of artists could never duplicate.

### Notable Quotables

*"All I remember about my wedding day in 1967 is that the Cubs lost a double-header." -George F. Will*

## Did You Know?

### Mike Kolodij

...that Mike Kolodij an outstanding softball player with the West Orange Embers, in the Morris County League, whose home run helped them win the 2919 Randolph Softball Tournament, is the most decorated police officer in the 177 year history of the Jersey City Police Department. Mike has more than six dozen awards, including twice winning the department's highest valor award- the Honorable Mention- as well as the Combat Cross. He has made over 3,500 arrests during his 34 year career- mostly as a plainclothes or undercover cop. The Jersey Journal called him "a rare blend of Serpico, Baretta, Belker from 'Hill Street Blues' and T. J. Hooker.

### Bob Rowland

...that late Bob Rowland (see related story on page 7, long time player with the Jersey Jags, player manager with the Jersey Pride, umpiring and playing with teams in Union County, was a decorated U.S. Air Force veteran. During his tour of duty he was assigned to the Presidential Honor Guard at the White House in Washington D.C. during the Eisenhower Administration.

### Bob Hospidor

Bob Hospidor (Hosie) was a Golden Glove boxer in the early fifties, 53-54-55, he fought in arenas in East Orange, Asbury Park, Fort Dix, Newark and other local arenas. He won the Flyweight Title (112 lbs.) in 1954 at the Military Park Hotel in Newark. While boxing at the Rahway High School in 1955, he met Phil Rizzuto who announced his fight that night. Hosies record was 29-5-1. He looks back at that time with fond memories. After his boxing career was over he joined the Middlesex County Sheriffs Department and retired several years ago. He plays in the over Middlesex Over 60 League.