

My name is Jim O'Hern and the summer of 1965 was my first time playing fast pitch softball. I was 19 years old and just finished my sophomore year at Morningside College where I played football and baseball. I was scheduled to play baseball that summer with a local town team, but due to a nasty accident during our second game, the team decided to end the season. A high school friend later approached me to find out if I would play softball on his team. I had not ever seen an adult softball game up to that point. I said yes and a lifelong love of fast pitch softball was born. I played until I was 46 years old.

Softball was very popular in Sioux City from the 1930's to the mid 1990's. In those early days, Sioux City supported as many as 40 teams spread over 4 leagues, each league represented a different skill level. After the 1965 season, I had to sit out for the next two summers while recovering from an injury suffered during a football game then later reinjured while playing baseball. After recovering from surgery, I was back playing softball. With the exception of one year that I was on the Cherokee Hamm's team, I played in Sioux City, mostly at Hubbard Park. I played on several teams over the years, but mostly it was with the same players. It seemed as though as we got better and played many more games and weekend tournaments, new sponsors were acquired. Our most productive years were with Gene's Tavern (73-75) and Sooland Sports (76-78).

During the many years of playing softball, I enjoyed a 35 year career of teaching High School Social Studies and coaching football and track for the Sioux City Community School District. The following is a list of some of the highlights I enjoyed playing fast pitch softball.

1970 Morningside Pizza – Top hitter in Sioux City Metro League - .441 Average

- 1971 Morningside Pizza –
1. 4th place hitter in Metro League - .377 Average
 2. Won the Class B State of Iowa championship
 3. Played in the B Regional Tournament at Port Huron, Michigan

- 1972 Cherokee Hamm's
1. Won District Tournament
 2. Place 2nd in Sub-State Tournament
 3. Won the LeMars Tournament
 4. Won 2 games in the Iowa State Open Tournament

- 1973 Gene's Tavern
1. Won 56 games, Lost 25 games
 2. Won the Iowa State A Tournament
 3. One of my best hitting years .372 Avg.
 4. Struck out only 3 times in 269 plate appearances.
 5. Won the Midwest Regional A Tournament in Ft. Dodge, Iowa

1974 Gene's Tavern

1. 70-12 record
2. Won the City Metro League
3. Won the District and Sub-State
4. Won 6 weekend tournaments
5. Leading hitter on team with .401
6. Only 11 strike outs for the season
7. State A Champions
8. Regional A Champions

1975 Gene's Tavern

1. Won the City Metro League
2. Won the District Tournament
3. 2nd Place in Sub-State Tournament
4. 2nd Place in State Open Tournament
5. 54-16 season record

1976 Sooland Sports

1. Won City Metro League
2. Won District Tournament
3. Season record of 64-19
4. 3rd Place in State Open

1977 Sooland Sports

1. Won the City Metro League
2. Season record of 64-26
3. Won District Tournament
4. Won Sub-State Tournament
5. 5th Place State Open

After the Sooland Sports team broke up, I continued to play with teams that did not travel or play weekend tournaments very often. My coaching career required a great deal more time as I was the head football coach at West High for 3 years and later head coach at East High for 5 years. I also served these schools as an assistant coach. I was defensive coordinator at West High, then offensive

coordinator at East High. By this time our children were getting older and I wanted to be part of their activities.

1979 Climate Control 1. Finished 2nd in State B Tournament

1980 Climate Control 1. Played in the State B Tournament

In 1986, after a couple years of retirement, several players 40 years and older created Sioux City's first 40 and Older team. We played in the league and in 1988 we took part in the State B Tournament and also the ASA over 40 Tournament in St. Joseph, Missouri. We did not win either game but we played our hearts out.

My final year of playing was in 1990 and turned out to be very memorable. We won the over 40 Regional qualifying tournament in Omaha and then won the National Masters Tournament which was also in Omaha.

The game of softball has meant different things to many who have played the game. This is true for me as well. It has provided an outlet for my competitive nature, each week looking forward to league play, weekend tournaments and the challenge of reaching one of the state tournaments.

More important are the people I met along this 26 year journey. I formed friendships with many of the fans who attended our games, with several umpires who worked so hard and, of course, with our opponents who were just as competitive as I was. Most important was the bond developed with my team mates. We spent countless hours practicing, playing and traveling together. These are friendships that have lasted a lifetime as several of us keep in contact.

If I could relive the softball part of my life, I would not change a thing. I don't think I could make it any better than it was.