

Rowan and Vonda Carlson: Together On and Off the Field

by Linda Lucchetti



When Rowan Carlson dons his uniform and gathers equipment to head off to a softball game, it's likely that his wife Vonda is by his side – not just accompanying him to watch the game, as most wives faithfully do – but also to take part in another way. You see, Vonda serves as the scorekeeper for Rowan's team, the Coyotes 75's.

The volunteer position of scorekeeper is one which Vonda 'stepped up to the plate' to fill in 2003. This means that whether the team plays at home on the Lincoln Hills' Del Webb Field, or on the road as one of the league's traveling teams, she either tracks the score digitally from the "crow's nest" or keeps a paper score during away games. She has also affectionately been given the title, "conciierge" since she organizes the team dinners whenever they play out of town.

"As a scorekeeper, you have to have your head in the game," she said, describing the job as one of being absorbed in what's happening on the field. "The best part about is that it keeps you in the game and you meet so many people."

What do others think of the scorekeeper being related to a team member?

“We sometimes get teased about working together,” Rowan said with a chuckle.

“But, there’s no conflict of interest,” Vonda added seriously. “I pride myself in being accurate.”

Rowan, who started in the recreation league of the Sun City Lincoln Hills’ senior league in 2002 soon after the couple moved from Concord, Calif., had played ball in high school and later fast pitch softball while serving in the Navy. First an outfielder, now he plays first base or as catcher, since having a hip replacement in 2011.

“Playing softball is something I never thought I’d be doing in retirement,” Rowan said. “It’s good exercise. I enjoy the camaraderie and it’s a way to meet people. “

The Carlsons, who first met in Stockton, have been married for 52 years. They have three daughters, six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Rowan is a California native from Stockton. After a stint in the Navy, he transferred from Delta Junior College to San Jose State, receiving a degree in business management.

He retired from Calpine Containers, a supplier of containers and packaging in the produce industry, after a 31-year career in sales.

Vonda was born and raised in Lodi where her father grew grapes on ten acres of land and later raised cattle. Working at a young age in her father’s business not only provided her with many skills, but also a strong work ethic. She went on to work at IBM in San Jose as a secretary for the manager of the sales office, and then on to banking as a financial and loan officer in Walnut Creek.

A motto that typifies Vonda’s personality is, “Volunteers live longer.” While residing in Concord, she was a volunteer at John Muir Hospital in neighboring Walnut Creek, and served in several departments, her favorite being the ER (Emergency Room). Since coming to Lincoln, she participated with the Lincoln Volunteer Center and was named their “Volunteer of the Year” in 2007.

The other reason Vonda is partial to the saying, “volunteers live longer” is because both she and Rowan are “shooting for 100” – that is, living healthy, active lives to become centenarians. In fact, displayed on their coffee table is the book: “The Roadmap to 100 -- The Breakthrough Science of Living a Long and Healthy Life,” by Walter M. Bortz II, M.D., a Stanford doctor. The popular publication advocates among other behaviors, social engagement and physical fitness for increased longevity.

In addition to their softball activities, Rowan and Vonda stay fit by working out in the gym, eating healthy and getting enough sleep. They say that meeting other seniors along their softball travels confirms that participating in sports helps people live their lives to the fullest.

It's clear that for both Rowan and Vonda Carlson, as a means of volunteering, staying active and being together, softball is the 'name of the game.'