**Softball Adventures**

Finally, there is the sport where I have some reasonable competence level. I am not a professional or even a polished amateur, but I can participate at a recreational level with some accomplishment. When I was 12 years old, I signed up late for Little League baseball. The Sacramento Solons needed a player, and they called me. I showed up and was immediately placed at shortstop since the regular person was out. When he came back, I moved over to second base where I mostly played for the rest of my career. The team had one really good pitcher, Jim Humison, and his dad was the coach. The playoffs were two games; we barely won the first, 3-2, no thanks to two errors on consecutive plays by our incompetent second baseman. The first ball went through my legs, the second was thrown over the first baseman’s head. Due to pitching inning limits, Jim could not finish the second game, so in the bottom of the last inning, we were behind by 0-7. Our team had the good fortune to get a few hits, a few walks, and a few fielding errors to win 8-7. I contributed to the inning with two walks, leading to a long history of getting walks in key situations. I also learned to never give up at that young age.

There were much better players in high school, but when I got to Caltech, I played second base all season on the Freshman baseball team. We had fun, but lacked competence, so we lost every game. The next year I tried out for the varsity, but never got a chance to play. Coach Ed Preisler criticized my one handed method of catching the ball. Most professionals catch the ball that way now! He also did not like my propensity to wait for the walk. Instead, I played intramural softball with Page House and we won the school championship. I also became captain of the chemistry graduate student team and seemed to be the captain/manager for most of the softball teams that I was on after that. At Northwestern University, the chemistry grad students formed an intramural fast-pitch team and we won the school championship three years in a row against other grad students, the fraternities, and the dorms. I batted leadoff, walked a lot, and played second base. We had some really good pitchers: Chris Petersen, Al Hochstetler, and Pete Sheridan. The rest of the team was also quite competent.

Around 1971, 10 person (with 4 outfielders) slow-pitch softball took over the sport. Softball became a better game with more hitting, more action, and much higher scores. Later, I was working at TRW and the software programmers played in the company league. Our team was the Turkeys and we lost every game. There followed a long series of recreational softball teams, generally one or two per year, that played in various company and city leagues. Some of them were co-ed. My teams won some, lost many, and generally had fun. I made friends with the team players along the way. My last team was at SAIC when I was 65 years old. We played in the Seal Beach recreational league. I had to become the pitcher, and our team was ahead in several games when the manager substituted for me. Oh well, we ended up losing every game. Any hit ball to the right side was a bad experience for the fielder over there. I am still interested in playing, but there do not seem to be any teams that are available for me.

Softball is my kind of sport; it is played on grass; much of the time is spent sitting down. Occasionally, you have to run fast. The manager can actually make a difference with correct lineup selection and fielder placement. People make friends on the field that continue onward, even after the usual post-game pizza party. When Hal and Ruth Hart retired from TRW, there were about two hundred people present. At one point, Hal asked for all those that had played softball on one of his teams over the many years he was at TRW to stand. Over half the people present stood up.