

# "The Hawks"

## After 50 years of a softball legacy, Tucson team finally retires

Story and Photos by Russell Garcia

In 1958, Alex Romero would get into his car and go house-to-house picking up his players. Many of the roads in Tucson, Arizona were still unpaved 50 years ago, but nonetheless Alex would make sure every member of his team made it to the field; even if it meant making more than one trip. Throughout the next five decades the Tucson team founded on athleticism, sportsmanship, responsibility, and respect came to be known simply as "The Hawks."

Alex Romero was a man

with a deliberate character who always thought of family and friends before himself. He was one man who embraced the spirit of competition and togetherness to help families overcome obstacles inherent to life in the barrio. His love of life, family, and softball manifested itself through years of brotherhood and goodwill on the softball field, and created lifelong bonds that will never be broken.

In 1986, Alex Romero retired to the great softball diamond in

the sky, and his one last request was to keep the team going. For the last 22 years, family and friends respected Romero's wish by fielding teams through trials and tribulations. But, this past Labor Day weekend, third, fourth, and fifth generation Hawks respectfully brought their half-century existence to a close at the 50 team Men's "C" National Fast Pitch Tournament in Prescott, Arizona.

After a 50 year stretch of self-sponsorship, thousands of games, and hundreds of tournaments, Billy Powe Jr. took it upon himself to insure that the Hawks would play into their 50<sup>th</sup> year. "It really means a lot to me because my grandfather wanted the team to go on, so I wanted to make sure we got to 50," he said.

Anita Romero was just a teenager when her father traveled in his car rounding up all the neighborhood boys to play softball. "My dad originally wanted the kids to have an organized activity in their lives. On the weekends it was a way to keep family and friends together and off the streets," she said.

Romero's message of unity quickly spread through Tucson like wildfire, along with the team's reputation of inclusion and competition.

Josie Powe is also Alex Romero's daughter. She said through the years, players became family, and the family became a team. "We became one big happy family. We saw

everyone grow up and start playing on the team. Now, there are guys on the team whose fathers played," Powe said.

Through the years, teammates were drawn together not only by bloodlines, but by the devotion and commitment established by the founder. "It was something that was in us. It was something we had in our blood, and what I had, everyone else had. We were all friends. We grew up together, loved to play the game together, and we all just wanted to be there," said Billy Powe Sr.

Powe Sr. began his playing career with the Hawks in 1958, and closed out his 30-year fast pitch career in 1988. He said it was an experience he is honored to have witnessed, and if he had the chance to do it all over again, he wouldn't change a thing.

Augustine Otero is another Hawk player with 30 years of service under his belt. He said playing with the team promoted camaraderie and winning. "I always wanted to play on the Hawks because they were the team to be on. It was great the way we all got along, and then we would go out and compete," said Otero. He went on to say that not only did the team win a lot of championships, but were given many Sportsmanship Awards handed out by the City of Tucson as well. In May, Romero and The Hawks were inducted into the Pima County Hall of Fame.



The Hawks.

That sportsmanship and recognition was a key principle to the lasting fellowship personified by the Hawks, and is what made it so important for younger generations. Frank Borquez, also known as Gordo, is a fifth generation descendant of Alex Romero who is proud to be a part of the heritage his great, great grandfather started. "I grew up at the ballpark and I always wanted to be a part of the team. For me, to be able to play is great. I feel lucky to be a part of this team with so many memories, and to be on the field with so many great players," said Borquez.

Alex Flores echoed that sentiment, and said he had to ride the pine for years before getting his chance to play. "It has been an honor to be on the Hawks. I grew up seeing all the trophies, being at the park, seeing all the pictures, and I always wanted to be in one of those pictures. I sat the bench for two years because I wanted to play on the Hawks," Flores said.

Even though the team name

is being retired, and the players may all join other teams, the alliance created by taking the field together for 50 years will never fade. "We have a huge family that is very supportive of each other. We are all very proud of the fact that we have always been able to play with the same team. The nucleus is always here," said Powe Jr. That nucleus is allowing the team to retire gracefully and with pride. "It is sad to see it go, but there are a lot more smiles than tears," said Flores.

Frank Dicochea is a member of the Hawks who is going to miss competing with his comrades, but knows the relationships they have formed will last a lifetime. "It was great to be a part of the Hawks, but we will always be around each other and be a part of each other's lives," he said.

Although the elder Romero never played the game, it was his love, support, inspiration, and influence that created a softball legacy that withstood the test of time.



Hawks baserunner steals second.



Hawks catcher makes a play at the plate.