Richmond Hill Weekly Wednesday, September 14, 1994

Dynes, a jewel in Softball Hall Of Fame

Jack Brooks

It's become almost a summer ritual for Vern Dynes. A trip down memory lane, so to speak, to the annual World Softball Championships. It's a chance to renew old aquaintances and maybe hear another "hi, Dynesy" filter down from somewhere up in the stands.

"I get to meet my old cronies," chuckled Dynes, fresh from this year's excursion with wife Marg to Summerside, P.E.I., site of the 1994 tournament.

It's been 22 years since his Dynes Jewellers put Richmond Hill on the international softball map, winning the 1972 Senior Men's World Softball Championship in Manila, the Philippines.

Originally from farm country north of Shelburne, Dynes arrived in Richmond Hill on Halloween Day, 1955, ("I came with the witches") and has operated his successful jewelry business in the same Yonge street location ever since.

The store is lined with evidence of his almost 40 year commitment to local sports.

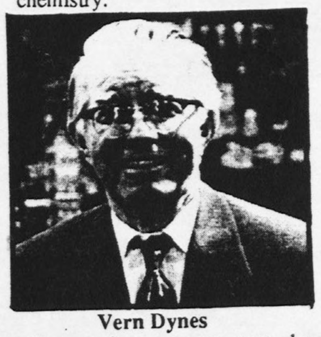
It was, stresses Dynes, "the true world championship" which his 1972 Jewellers won, and he has the trophy, presented by Ferdinand Marcos, the country's president, in the Softball Hall of Fame to prove it.

Every year there's a tournament which is billed as the World Championship, as was the case in Summerside last month. However, according to Dynes,the "true" championship comes around only once every four years, on Olympic year. That's when each country sends only one team.

"Don't get me wrong," said Dynes, who still wears his championship ring. "Some of the best teams in the world are there, (at the annual meets) but it's not the same."

Of particular pride to Dynes is the fact that his was the last "owner-team" to win the title.

Since 1972, Canada has been represented by a cross-country all-star team. It's a format which Dynes believes overlooks one key ingredient in a winner- "chemistry."



Vern Dynes

Twenty-four years ago he refused to be pressured into bolstering his lineup with all-stars.

"The Canadian Amateur Softball Association (CASA) was pushing us to add five players," recalled Dynes, "but we stuck to our guns. How does my manager (Russell "Casey" Cripps) tell five guys they're staying home after coming that far."

The names will stir some memories among ball fans who go back to the pre-slowpitch era.

The outfield of Les Downing, Derek Kinnersly and Joe O'Neill was "the most outstanding outfield I ever saw," in Dynes' opinion.

Third baseman Bobby Smith, ("a competitor and a gentleman"), and shortstop Duane Reid, ("the best pair of hands that ever held a ball").

Then there were the pitchers. Three of the best, but don't ask who was number one.

"I'll never be quoted as naming my ace pitcher," smiled Dynes, diplomatically listing Bob Domik, Bill Drennan and Dick Hames in alphabetical order.

Although Hames pitched an incredible 1-0 final game victory over the U.S., and drove in Smith with the winner in the bottom of the eleventh, it was, Dynes points out, a total team effort.

"Every game is a final, and it was Domik who threw against a great New Zealand club and got us into the final," he pointed out.

Bill Drennan was another story, hurling the Jewellers to the provincial crown when Domik was declared ineligible after Scarborough, Domik's old club, refused to grant him a release.

"If it weren't for Billy Drennan, firing ball the way he did, the Dynes Jewellers would never have made it to the Nationals," stated Dynes. "I take my hat off to him."

Another man high on Dynes' list of heroes is manager Cripps who "did a whale of a job.

"Off the field Casey was as meek and mild as a kitten. On the field he was a little bandy rooster," laughed Dynes.

Comparing today's game to that of the '70's, Dynes doesn't hesitate to criticize the current state of pitching.

"It's a fad, the in thing," said Dynes referring to the "jump," which pitchers use for what amounts to an unfair advantage.

"It used to be that a pitcher had to be in contact with the rubber when he released the ball," he said. "Now, if he can jump eight feet it's permissable, as long as his back foot stays inside the circle." (the eight-foot radius circle around the pitcher's plate.)

For Dynes, the long and sometimes unpredictable road of sport took a definite upturn in 1990.

That was the year of his induction into the Softball Hall Of Fame which took place in Charlottetown, P.E.I., followed by the presentation of the prestigious Silver Stick Award by the Ontario Hockey Association.

Indeed, Dynes has been good for sport, but as he says, "it's a two-way street. Sport has been good to me."

As for future vacation trips, the Dynes' will probably be off to Sioux City, Iowa next summer and in 1996 the next "real" championship is slated for Kimberley, Wisconsin.

Will "Dynsey" be mingling somewhere in that crowd?

"If I'm still around," he said with that familiar grin, "I'll be there."