

Johnny Appell - HoF - 2003

Johnny Appell, Waco, Texas
(Nomination submitted by Dick Gonzales, Las Vegas, NV)

Born - September 23, 1923 in Waco, Texas

In the late 1930's Johnny was invited to play with the R.C. Cola Fastpitch team in Waco's Major League division and became the youngest player on the team. As well, Johnny was an accomplished basketball player at Waco High and Baylor University and played baseball as a teenager, in the war, and some semi-pro and pro ball.

Johnny's most memorable personal moment was hitting a 2-run "dinger" in extra innings for his United Tile team in 1947 that sent his team to the NSC Championships, also in Phoenix AZ.

By 1951, Johnny was a veteran of the softball campaigns, and as a 27 year old, he was an outfielder/playing manager. He assembled a team comprised entirely of players from Waco, (now population 104,000) and sponsored by neighboring city (village) of Calvert (now population 1500). He led an unheralded team of scrappy Texans from the Lone Star state to Phoenix AZ for the National Softball Congress (now ISC) Championships.

With a loss to the host city Pike Plumbers of Phoenix, the squad was relegated to the losers' bracket, but fought back. During the week, the Texans knocked off the defending champion Hanford, CA Kings 5-1, facing them again in the losers' bracket, and eliminating the west coast Kings 4-3. This provided an opportunity to meet the undefeated Plumbers once again, and Calvert prevailed in two extra-inning games, shutting out Pike 1-0 and 5-0 to emerge as 1951 champions. The team finished the season with a remarkable record of 85-3. In '52 and '53, the team finished 2nd and 3rd respectively, for an enviable 3-year mini-dynasty.

Nominator Dick Gonzales states that Johnny sparked the Calvert team that rejuvenated enthusiasm for men's softball at a time, post-war, when interest was fading. Arguably, without Johnny and others, the NSC might not have survived and developed into the ISC.

Johnny joins team-mates Clayton Dugger and Dick Gonzales on the roster of the prestigious ISC Hall of Fame.

In his beloved community of Waco, Johnny has volunteered with the First Methodist Church, the Chamber of Commerce, the Baylor Bear Foundation and Letterman's Club, as has served as President of the Baylor University-Waco Foundation.

Johnny is now retired as a contractor with Acoustic Ceiling & Ceramic Tile, and continues to reside comfortably in hometown Waco with his wife Beth. Together they raised two children, John Jr. and Suzanne.