

# **BOB WELBY MEMORIAL RECOGNITION OF SERVICE AWARD**

**Norb Thurmer - Manager/ Sponsor - 2004**

For the past 50 plus years, Norb Thurmer has been St. Louis Softball.



You might have seen him around the ball park, and if you haven't seen him, you most likely have at least heard him. A fierce competitor, his always recognizable gravelly, booming voice has been heard coming from dugouts all across North America since 1950.

Just as quick with a comeback as he is with a laugh, Norb Thurmer may just be what this game is all about and should always be.

Although the game has changed significantly since Norb first entered the softball scene as a player/coach/sponsor in 1950 with his Thurmer's Bar team, he still approaches the game with the same attitude. He gives no quarter and takes no quarter. And all he ever asks for is a fair fight.

Throughout the 1950's through the 1970's, Norb's teams competed throughout the Midwest, where teams could play 100 games in the summer against some of the best in the game and never have to travel more than 4 or 5 hours.

Norb took a step away from the "amateur" game in 1973 when the Professional World Softball League was formed to be a part owner and coach of the St. Louis Browns. That same year, the only year for the PWSL, the Browns captured the league crown behind the pitching of the legendary Roy Burlison.

In 1979 Norb was introduced to the ISC by two of his friends who had transferred to the St. Louis area, Lowell Radcliff (umpire) and Jack Van Voorst (ISC Outstanding Pitcher in 1974). That same year, Norb was offered the original position of Missouri State Commissioner for the ISC, which unfortunately, he was not able to take at that time, but did recommend Bob Welby, who later went on to become the President of the ISC, for the position.

In 1982, Norb enjoyed his first final four of the ISC when his Budweiser Kings took home a fourth place finish in Kimberly. One year later, in 1983 in Bakersfield, the Budweiser Kings placed 2nd, losing the final game to the Lancaster Chameleons. During that time, Russell Boice (ISC HoF 1996), handled the managing duties while Norb was an assistant coach and remained a presence in the dugout, leading in his own way. When Russell Boice left, Norb would come back again as the manager and stay there, managing and helping sponsor such St. Louis teams as Midwest GMC, the Dealers, Welby's, and Lafayette Pub.

Since that initial ISC team, Norb has been on the St. Louis bench for 25 ISC World Tournaments and has been involved in ISC Softball longer than nearly any person in any capacity since that time. He may not be recognized as the coach these days, and you may not see Norb Thurmer out on the field until the game is over, but make no mistake who is in charge of St. Louis Softball. You can see him down at the end of the bench, scorebook in hand and a victory cigar in his pocket waiting to be lit.

It's the same man who has been St. Louis Softball for better than 50 years.