

Ed Klecker, Sunset Beach, CA



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Ed Klecker, born in National City, California, enjoyed the lifestyle that the west coast provides. The endless summer afforded an abundance of opportunity to play softball under the California sun. And Ed could play the game... really well. His softball roots are entrenched in the extensive and competitive youth league of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon).

Ed first tasted significant success, named as the most valuable junior pitcher at a 1958 Church-wide tournament in Salt Lake City, UT, and he continued to pitch with Mormon teams for the next decade. Ed advanced to senior ball with the storied Long Beach Nitehawks in the mid-60's and then joined Lanny Rupp and the Lakewood Jets, competing in the ASAs. In 1970, the 6'5" fireballer hurled 23 shutouts in 28 games, fanning 342 batters.

More amazingly, in 1971, in the California Western Softball Congress, Ed hurled 120 consecutive innings without yielding an earned run. At that time, Ed stated "that statistics don't mean much anymore. I want to win games and a title." The objective was clear - to win a significant national team title. Rupp entered Lakewood into the ISC competition and the Jets and Ed enjoyed a great run. The team captured the ISC Championship at Rock Island, IL in 1973, sandwiched between a pair of 4th place finishes in Kimberly, WI ('72) and Sun City, AZ ('74).

Ed was named to the ISC All-World team in all three tournaments. It was in the '73 championship tournament that Ed was truly magnificent on the mound. He pitched 45.3 innings, allowing a scant single earned run. His reputation as the West Coast "Strike-out King" was confirmed, as he fanned 67 batters. His 5-0 record earned him the Top Pitcher AND Most Valuable Player awards.

Sadly, Ed's rotator cuff wore out and while he tried to continue to pitch in 1975, his amazing career was sun-setted at age 35. Ed cited the '73 season as easily his most memorable fastball moment, and recalls in awe the prolific and successful Long Beach Nitehawk teams of the 50's, 60's and 70's. Ed stated that shortstop Nick Hopkins (HoF 1992) was "simply the best ever to put on a uniform" and that "it was my distinct privilege to be his team-mate."

For many years, Ed was a firefighter in Long Beach, CA, retiring prematurely in 1986 as a result of back problems. He and his wife Sharon have two children, Kim and Greg who have provided a dozen grand-children.