

NCSS Player Interview – Rico Coronado

Player Interview #3 – Who Am I? – I am Rico Coronado

Some people think I was born in a log cabin. That would be wrong, but more of that at the end of the story. I was the 10th child in a family of 13, all born at home. Now I have two daughters, one of whom you sometimes see in the bleachers at our NCSS games. I also have two grand-daughters and 2 great-grandsons. I never really went to school. I just absorbed everything. In fact, I received my official high school diploma through the U S Navy.

I moved to San Diego in 1954 while serving four years as a radioman in the U S Navy. That is also where my softball career started. With absolutely no experience, I was recruited solely for my athletic ability, learning as I went, and I played second base and then more time displaying my speed in the outfield. After serving in the U S Navy, I anchored (away?) in San Diego. I went to cosmetology school in 1963-64. I still work so if you're ever in need of a hair style, call me when you learn who I am at 858-486-1290.

This is where I also met my wife of 50 years, Merry Jane. I was known for my ability to cut a rug. I guess you could have called me a professional dancer. My mother always said "that kid will dance from the womb to the tomb." Naturally, I met her at a dance. At first she didn't want to dance with me claiming she wasn't that good on the floor. I finally coaxed her to dance with me – big mistake. While she took to my lead, I got a little carried away with the moves. She wouldn't even talk with me saying I was too fancy. It wasn't until a year later I ran into her for a third time at an SDSU shorthand class she was in. As she was leaving, possibly forever, I couldn't think of anything smart to say, so I ... accidentally bumped her knocking all her papers to the floor. How suave. I persisted, talking through her friend, and finally scored a date. The rest is history. She turned me into a good man.

In addition to cutting a rug, I found I was also good at cutting ... head rugs. Hairdressers. In those days there were two kinds of hairdressers: gays and sex maniacs. All I would ever say was I'm not gay. Other than that, why a hair dresser? Well, my father wouldn't let me play with paper dolls, so I decided to play with real dolls.

Back to softball. I started playing in NCSS around 2009. I currently play with the Top Gun Diamonds (80+) and Top Gun Six Bits (75+). Way back in the day, in our fastpitch bar league we would have 78 teams. I had a hand in starting the first slow-pitch league in San Diego, starting with that bar league, one team, then 20 teams and eventually a 4th of July tournament with 250 teams, the biggest in California. By then the tables had turned and there were more slow pitch teams than fast pitch teams. I played softball all over the place. I became the National Director for USSSA, which has now been pretty much been replaced by SSUSA. Through that work I was named to the USSSA (U-Trip) Hall of Fame in Peterson, Virginia. I have also been named the Top Gun Player of the Year and more recently I was inducted into the Top Gun Hall of Fame.

I have played with some great players over the years. One long time teammate has been Tom Whelan. Tom is now famous as the winningest player in OMBAC Over-the-Line history and was named by the San Diego Union-Tribune as the best hitter to ever come out of San Diego – and yes, that includes Ted

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Williams. Another famous teammate was Tom Selleck, when he was the Marlboro model, before he became famous as Magnum, PI.

When asked who my favorite players were, I quickly said Ted Williams. I like players who like to win, are aggressive, who are students of the game, but who can also be a nice guy and fair. My most memorable moment in NCSS? That would have to be when we pulled off a 5-2-3 triple play. Catching, with the bases juiced, I signaled the pitcher to throw inside and 3B to guard the line. The batter (who still plays in our league) grounded down the line, we tagged 3, threw home and I made the throw to 1B. What a way to kill an inning! Sound familiar, Gary?

About a year after my wife died, I met my current girlfriend, Linda Anderson, at the World Masters softball tournament in Las Vegas. She was also a dancer and loved softball. What she didn't like about softball was gossip, so she read a book and taught herself how to keep score for a team.

It's been a long journey. Asked what advice I'd give to younger players, I don't do that so much, but I think it's a softball family. I have enough rings and hats. Just keep on playing. It's more about playing and staying healthy, living longer. Senior softball is the best thing that ever happened to me. To the guys who are older like me I also say keep playing so they can't throw dirt on you.

The interviewer saved my birthplace for the end of the story so people won't know immediately who I am. No, I wasn't born in a log cabin. I was born on June 11, 1937 on the San Carlos Indian reservation in Arizona, about 100 miles from Tucson. Mom was in the Mescalera tribe of Apache Indians. So if you don't know me by now, I'd like to welcome you to the North County Senior Softball league.

