

## BATTER UP

We all have dreams. Some folks want to be doctors, lawyers, Olympic athletes or baseball players. I remember when I was a kid, I wanted to be Johnny Roseborro (I am from, Los Angeles, after all). I dreamed that I would be behind the plate catching Sandy Koufax or at least in the press box helping Vince Scully call a game on the radio. Well, that dream didn't come true.

For a member of RMGC and resident of Rossmoor, Harry Laiolo's dream came true. He was signed by the St. Louis Cardinals upon graduating from St. Mary's College.

Harry was home grown from right here in Oakland. His grandparents came from the "Old Country", Italy, in the early 1900's directly to Oakland where his father was born and raised. After being in the army in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, his Dad became an owner of the Toscana Bakery Company. I would guess that many of the readers of this article knew of this bakery over the years.

Harry was born in 1944 going to high school at Oakland Tech where he became their star catcher and went from there to St. Mary's College where he continued his baseball career. He graduated with a degree in Economics. The day before his graduation he signed a minor league contract with the St. Louis Cardinals. The day after, he met with his new team at Candlestick Park where the Cards had a 3-day series with the Giants.

His professional career started Rock Hill, South Carolina, playing there for 1 year AA Ball. The 1<sup>st</sup> pitcher he caught was Steve Carlton a future Hall of Famer. The season completed and shortly after Harry went to Florida for Spring Training, catching the likes of Bob Gibson, another Hall of Famer. Subsequently Harry went Cedar Rapids, Idaho for the next 2 years playing Class A Baseball. Baseball meant a great deal to Harry, especially the friends he made both on and off the field. He has maintained friendships with some of these folks, 50 plus years later.

In 1966, Harry decided to give up his baseball career and get married to his love, Andrea. She gave birth to Matt, their only child. In 1993, Andrea passed away. For a time, Harry was at a loss. However, in 1994, met Roxanne his wife since 1995. He worships the ground she walks on and knows how lucky he is to have met her. She has been his right hand for 25 years. Roxanne has been wonderful to Matt and his family. She has been a wonderful grandmother to Harry's grandchildren Michelle and Natalie. Harry says that Roxanne is the absolute Rock of the family.

Back to his carrier. After leaving baseball, Harry went to a business on which he was raised and remained involved in the bakery business until 2013. At that time, Harry and Roxanne moved to Rossmoor.

Here at Rossmoor, Harry is commonly seen playing golf. He has played golf for many years beginning as a kid with his dad. The game provided him with the opportunity to get to know his

father away from their home and work. They were very close. He said that comradery, the kidding, the personal relationships are what the game is all about.

The last few years have been pretty intense for Harry. A couple of surgeries and prolonged issues with a neurologic issue have been hard on him. However, with Roxanne's support and the support of the Rossmoor community, he is doing quite well.