

Four More Months (At Least), And What I Did On My 60th Birthday

22 Dec 2017

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The below except by HBC is from the total article at <http://tabr.net/four-months-least-60th-birthday/>

As I write this three days before Christmas, the uptrend in stock prices we've been touching on for most of this year continues its relentless ascent, with almost all major indexes making new all-time highs on December 18. We'll detail below why the party is not likely over, despite rampant optimism and some speculation.

In addition, yours truly joined the Sexagenarian tribe on November 9 (you do have to look up the definition!). Yes, I turned 60. But what I did for my birthday was pretty unconventional (though not for me!). Hopefully, you'll enjoy the story.

What I Did On My 60th Birthday

Baseball has been, and still is, a big part of my life. I started at 8 in Little League, with two years of varsity in high school. At College of Sequoias in Visalia, I decided I probably wasn't quite good enough to play pro, and then decided I wanted to work in pro baseball on the business side. That was the main reason I chose to attend Cal State Fullerton and major in Sports Administration. I knew Fullerton was an emerging baseball power with a really good business school, and they were 6 miles from my favorite team the California Angels, which is where I ultimately wanted to work.

That plan worked perfectly, as it turned out. I interned for Coach Augie Garrido at Fullerton in 1978, then joined the Angels as a PR intern, and landed a full time position with them in August 1979 as Assistant PR Director. That lasted until December 1981 when I joined E.F. Hutton as a stockbroker trainee and left baseball employment.

But the passion for the game never left, so at 31 in 1988, I started playing regularly in the Men's Senior Baseball League, which was REAL baseball, with spikes and all. In my second year, I made the All-Star Game (voted on by other teams) and started in the outfield at UC Irvine where the game was played. But in 1989, I met my future wife, and all of a sudden, playing every Sunday afternoon for about 25 weeks in a row isn't so cool to the girl you're dating. So, I stopped. For nearly 14 years (I did start playing men's ice hockey in 1993, but that is another story).

Then in 2002, I decided I wanted to go to Angels Fantasy Camp just once, especially because I knew almost all of the instructors, as I had worked with them while with the Angels. That experience got me interested again, and as a result of Fantasy Camp, a bunch of guys from Orange County banded together and started their own league, getting permission to use the Angels' exact uniforms and the whole bit. They are called the Halo Baseball Club, and you would not believe the professionalism and organization of this great group of men.

The teams play all of their games at Fullerton Junior College, use wood bats, have experienced umpires at each game and a trainer (hey, these guys are old). I have played somewhat regularly for the past 10 years or so, but decided to take last year off and see how I felt about it. I was only playing about once per month, which was plenty for me and being mindful of our family, but it is hard to get into a rhythm with hitting and throwing when you play once a month.

This year, I decided to give it one more shot, but for the first time I ever, my playing was beset by injury. In May, I pulled my left calf pretty badly, and then after re-habbing it for over two plus months, did the same thing in my very first game back in August. I was quite fortunate I did not tear my calf and require surgery, but this got me to thinking that maybe it was time. Time to stop. But, I wanted to go out on my terms. So, I once again began to rehab my calf with physical therapy with a purpose in mind, which was to scrimmage with the Titan Baseball team one last time.

Backstory—my involvement with Cal State Fullerton has been growing during the last 14 years, both with the Finance Department and the Baseball team, and I'd previously scrimmaged twice with the team in the past few years, getting to face several of our top pitchers. And that's what I wanted to do, one last time. So, I laid out my thoughts with our head coach, Rick Vanderhook, and put together a plan to get acclimated to the speed of playing with 20-year-old Division 1 baseball players, a team that is consistently one of the best in the nation.

A week before my birthday, I spent five hours practicing with the guys. Stretching, baserunning drills, infield, the batting cage, live batting practice, the whole thing. For those of you who may think baseball is a slow game, you are wrong. The speed of the game on the field and in the batter's box at the college level and above is exceptionally fast, and immensely detailed. It is why the players who can slow the game down in their minds and let their physical tools take over are successful.

On my birthday, I participated in another five hour practice, which concluded with a four-inning game. The picture below was taken with our entire team and coaches before we started that practice.



I did not play in the game that day, but my team lost the game, and the losing team had to run "stadiums," which is a drill where you start at the bottom of the soccer/football stadium and run up the steps all the way

to the top, as fast as you can. In this case, though, because there are no seats on one side of the stadium, the “steps” are about 3 feet high. So, I ran with the guys. We had 5 reps but I could only last 3. One of our guys, Jake Pavletich, told me I really needed to stop because I probably was going to puke. So I did. No, I didn’t puke! I listened to Pav and stopped.

This was all in getting me ready for Saturday’s full on practice and scrimmage, where I played four innings at first base and got to face pitchers Colton Eastman and Blake Workman, who are shown with me below on the left and right.



To give you some perspective, Colton will be entering his junior year at Fullerton and is a pre-season 2nd team All-American as picked by Collegiate Baseball, while Blake is one of our top relief pitchers. The team is coming off its 2nd appearance in the College World Series in the last three years, and is ranked 12th in the nation coming into the 2018 season, after finishing 7th in the nation last year.

Colton and Blake did me no favors—we competed against each other, and they were throwing their normal stuff, which is in the upper 80s and low 90s on the radar gun. Unfortunately, I did not win either battle, hitting a fly ball down the left field line against Colton which was caught in foul territory, followed by a really good at bat against Blake, hitting a line drive to our left fielder, Chris Prescott.

All in all, it was a tremendous two weeks, doing something that I took pretty seriously, knowing that I could hold my own, and grateful for the wonderful relationships I have with our coaches and players. Thanks guys. I wear our uniform with much Titan Pride.

But my “competitive” days are over. As my wife Michelle stated, “Bob, don’t quit your day job.” Yes, I realize I’m more valuable to all of you at my desk, doing what I do, but heck, one can dream. If Donald Trump can be President, why can’t I be the oldest designated hitter in baseball history?