

Quinto Christopher



During his heyday, **Quinto Christopher** was the consummate shortstop. It didn't matter if it was baseball or softball, hit a ball to him and more often than not batters were heading back toward the bench.

Christopher was born in Ridgefield but grew up in the Springfield section of Norwalk and it wasn't long before he became a fixture on many of the local ball fields, one in particular.

"He and a group of boys from that neighborhood played a lot at the old Baxter Grounds," Lou D'Orso, another ballplayer from that era, recalled. "They used to play at Harbor View where those houses are built now on Baxter Drive. Quinto was a good glove and a good hitter, he could do everything. He was a good all-around athlete."

But he was best known for his standout ability as a shortstop, following in the footsteps of his older brother, Americo 'Rinky' Christopher, a 1982 Old Timers honoree and an outstanding shortstop in his day as well.

"Quinto came from a family of shortstops," D'Orso noted.

Christopher certainly continued the family tradition wherever he played. That included three years during the early 1930s with the American Legion baseball team where he played under coach Buck Day and with teammates such as Lou Eletto, Frank Imply, 'Beans' Belardinelli, and Lou Bottone.

In fact, when asked what his greatest feat in sports was, Christopher listed the American Legion game against Waterbury when he flawlessly handled 12 chances at shortstop without an error to help the Norwalkers post a key victory. He also collected two hits in the game.

Following his days with the Legion, Christopher played five more years of shortstop with the Strawberry Hill team in the old Twilight League.

"In order to play in that league, you had to be pretty good," D'Orso pointed out.

But Christopher's baseball career was put on hold from 1939 to 1945 while he served in the army. He continued to display leadership qualities, however, as a staff sergeant during the Normandy Invasion, and five days after D-Day he was presented with a Bronze Star.

Upon returning home, Christopher couldn't wait to get back on the local diamonds, but this time to play softball.

"After the war, baseball died," Christopher, who coached softball for three years while in the army explained. "So I got into fast pitch softball."

The size of the ball didn't bother Christopher, who continued to dazzle crowds with his defensive play at shortstop as he helped lead the Enterprise team to a city championship.

Christopher played well into the 1950s, and even when his playing days were over he stayed in softball as a coach with both the LZ Club and the Laurels.

A lifetime member of both the American Legion and Sons of Italy, Christopher retired after 25 years as an operating engineer with T.J. Riordan and then 20 years with the Hat Corporation of Norwalk.

Now 87 years old, Christopher doesn't play or coach any longer, but he is still very much involved with sports, especially baseball. The father of two and grandfather of three, he followed his grandsons, Don and Kevin Osvay, who both played at Fairfield High School and with the Fairfield American Legion.

And Christopher can still be found at many local sporting events in Norwalk, including Norwalk High School and American Legion baseball games.

"He loves the game and still spends a lot of time around it," D'Orso said. "I see him at the high school games all the time. He was a great student of the game and he still helps out some of the players whenever he can."

"Sports keeps you young," Quinto Christopher added. That's why I still follow it and love to go to games."